

MAY 2025

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**CURRENT
AFFAIRS**



May 2025

Day-by-day analysis of current affairs from **May 2025**, meticulously curated for the **UPSC Civil Services Preliminary Examination**. It integrates current events with the static syllabus of **Polity**, **Economy**, **History**, **Geography**, **Environment**, and **Science & Technology**, offering context, conceptual clarity, and forward linkages. The aim is to equip aspirants with a multidimensional understanding necessary to tackle the integrated nature of UPSC questions.

May 1, 2025: Labour Rights and Social Reform

International Labour Day (May Day): Context and Significance

International Labour Day, celebrated on **May 1**, honors the contributions of workers and the historical labor movement's struggle for rights and fair working conditions. In India, the day serves as an occasion to assess and promote labor welfare initiatives, particularly focusing on reforms for the unorganized sector and skill upgradation programs.

Historical Origins: The Haymarket Affair

The origins of **May Day** are deeply rooted in the fight for the **eight-hour workday** in the late 19th century. The pivotal event was the **Haymarket Affair** in **Chicago, USA**. On **May 4, 1886**, a peaceful labor rally was organized to protest police violence that had resulted in the deaths of workers at the McCormick Reaper Works the previous day.

During the rally at Haymarket Square, an unidentified person threw a dynamite bomb into the police ranks, leading to chaos, gunfire, and the deaths of seven police officers and at least four civilians. This tragic event became a powerful international symbol for the struggle for **workers' rights**, free speech, and the right to public assembly.

India's New Labour Law Framework

In recent years, India has undertaken a monumental reform of its labor laws, consolidating **29 central laws** into **four comprehensive codes**. This initiative aims to simplify the complex legal structure, promote **ease of doing business**, and extend **social security** to a wider section of the workforce.

1

The Code on Wages, 2019

This is the first of the four codes, amalgamating the **Payment of Wages Act, 1936**, the **Minimum Wages Act, 1948**, the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

- Introduces a statutory **"floor wage"** to be fixed by the Central Government
- Makes **minimum wage provisions** universally applicable to all employees
- Provides a single, uniform definition of 'wages' to reduce litigation
- Explicitly prohibits gender discrimination in matters of wages

2

The Industrial Relations Code, 2020

This code subsumes three key laws: the **Industrial Disputes Act, 1947**, the Trade Unions Act, 1926, and the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946.

The erstwhile **Industrial Disputes Act, 1947**, was the cornerstone of industrial relations, establishing a comprehensive machinery for the prevention and settlement of disputes through bodies like Conciliation Officers, Labour Courts, and Industrial Tribunals.

3

The Code on Social Security, 2020

This code aims to create a **universal social security framework**. A significant feature is its attempt to extend social security benefits to workers in the **unorganized sector**, including **gig and platform workers**, who were previously outside the ambit of most labor welfare laws.

4

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code, 2020

This code amalgamates 13 existing laws regulating the health, safety, and working conditions in establishments like factories, mines, docks, and construction sites.

- Standardizes working hours to a maximum of **eight hours per day**
- Mandates **Safety Committees** in establishments with 500+ workers
- Allows for the employment of women in all types of work

Comparison of Old Laws and New Labour Codes

| Feature | Old Laws (Select Examples) | New Labour Codes | Key Changes & Implications |
|---------------------|---|--|---|
| Minimum Wage | Minimum Wages Act, 1948 : Applied only to "scheduled employments" notified by governments. Multiple definitions of wages led to confusion. | Code on Wages, 2019 : Universal application to all employees. Introduction of a statutory "floor wage" by the Centre. Uniform definition of 'wages'. | Expands the safety net for minimum wages to the entire workforce. The floor wage ensures a national baseline, reducing regional disparity. |
| Industrial Disputes | Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 : Provided for a complex machinery of conciliation and adjudication. Specific rules for strikes, lockouts, and retrenchment. | Industrial Relations Code, 2020 : Modifies conditions for legal strikes (e.g., notice period). Increases the threshold for government permission for layoffs in larger firms. | Aims to increase flexibility for employers and reduce industrial friction, though concerns have been raised about potential impacts on workers' bargaining power. |
| Social Security | Fragmented laws for different sectors (e.g., EPF Act, ESI Act). No specific provisions for gig/platform workers. | Code on Social Security, 2020 : Aims to create a universal framework . Includes provisions for unorganized, gig, and platform workers . | A significant step towards universalizing social security, addressing the needs of the modern workforce. Implementation remains a key challenge. |
| Occupational Safety | Multiple laws for different sectors (e.g., Factories Act, 1948; Mines Act, 1952). | OSH Code, 2020 : Consolidates 13 laws into a single code. Standardizes provisions for working hours, safety committees, and women's employment. | Simplifies compliance for establishments operating across different sectors. Formalizes provisions for women working at night with safety conditions. |

Cultural Linkage: Jagadguru Basaveshwara's Philosophy

On this day, the government also commemorated the philosophy of **Jagadguru Basaveshwara**, a **12th-century** philosopher, social reformer, and statesman from **Karnataka** who founded the **Lingayat sect**. His teachings offer a profound indigenous perspective on **labor, ethics, and social equality**.

The government's emphasis on his philosophy on **International Labour Day** represents a strategic effort to frame **labor rights** within a national, duty-based cultural context, which contrasts with the Western, conflict-oriented origins of May Day.

Kayaka (Work as Worship)

Central to Basaveshwara's teachings is the principle of "**Kayaka**," which translates to "work" or "divine work." The philosophy, encapsulated in the phrase "**Kayakave Kailasa**" (**Work is Heaven**), posits that every individual must engage in a profession of their choice with utmost sincerity and dedication.

This concept **dignifies all forms of labor**, rejecting any hierarchy based on caste or occupation and viewing work itself as a form of worship and a path to spiritual enlightenment.

Dasoha (Equal Distribution/Sharing)

Complementing Kayaka is the principle of "**Dasoha**," which means "distribution" or "sharing." It advocates that individuals should take from their earnings only what is necessary for their sustenance and **contribute the surplus back to society and the poor**.

This principle promotes **economic equity**, **social responsibility**, and discourages the accumulation and hoarding of wealth.

Anubhava Mantapa (The Hall of Spiritual Experience)

To put his ideals into practice, Basavanna established the **Anubhava Mantapa** in **Kalyana**. Often referred to as the "**world's first parliament**," it was a revolutionary public assembly where **men and women from all castes and socioeconomic backgrounds**, known as **Sharanas (seekers)**, gathered to engage in open dialogue.

The discussions and philosophical insights were documented in the form of simple, poetic Kannada verses known as **Vachanas**.

May 2-3, 2025: World Press Freedom Day

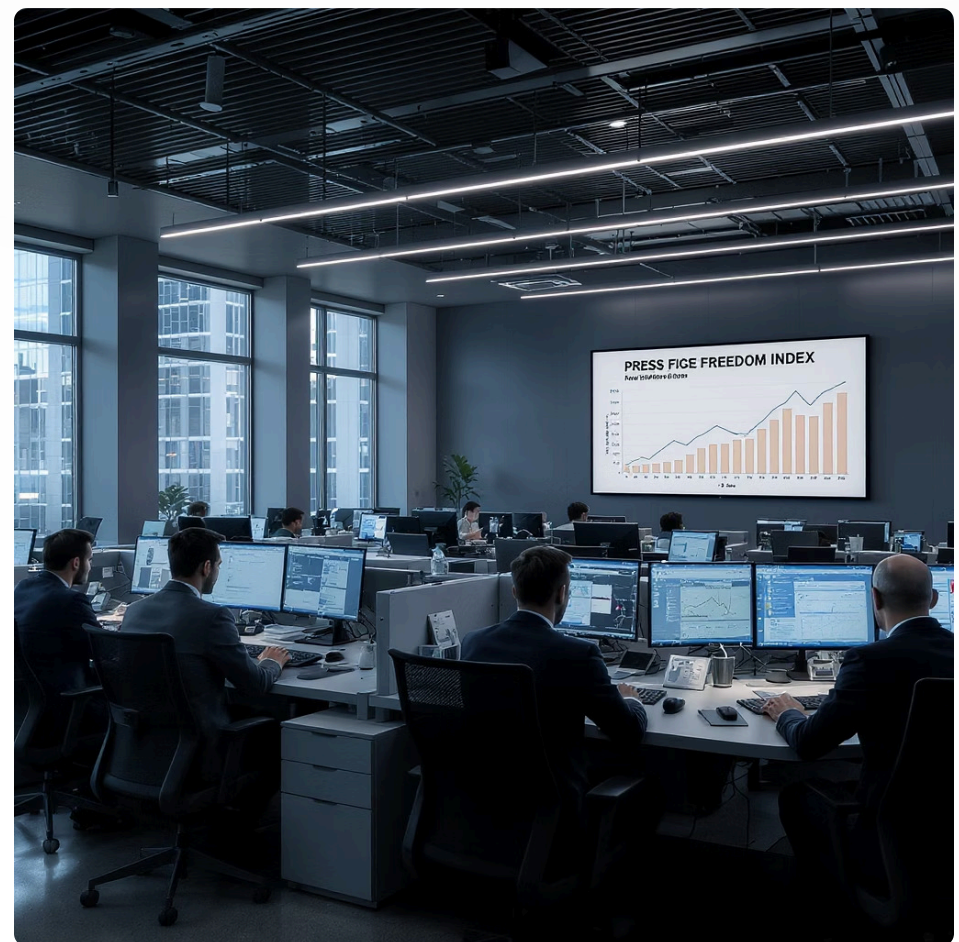
Event Context and the World Press Freedom Index

World Press Freedom Day, observed on **May 3**, serves as a global reminder of the importance of a **free and independent press** for a functioning democracy. The day's discussions in **India** invariably focus on the challenges faced by journalists and the country's standing in the **World Press Freedom Index**.

Publishing Body and Methodology

The index is an annual ranking compiled by the Paris-based **Reporters Without Borders (RSF)**. It is crucial to understand that the index does not measure the quality of journalism in a country; rather, it assesses the **degree of freedom available to journalists, news organizations, and netizens**.

The ranking is derived from a combination of a qualitative analysis, based on a questionnaire sent to a select group of experts (journalists, academics, human rights activists), and a quantitative tally of abuses and acts of violence against journalists during the preceding year.



The index's **methodology** evaluates **press freedom** across **five key indicators**, providing a holistic view of the media environment. A declining rank in the index is not merely a reflection of overt state censorship but is a **composite score** indicating systemic erosion across multiple domains.

Key Determinants of Press Freedom Index



Political Context

Evaluates the degree of media autonomy from political pressure and the extent to which the media can function as a **watchdog** holding the government accountable.

Examples Relevant to India: Pressures from political parties, use of government advertising as leverage, and rhetoric against critical journalists.



Legal Framework

Assesses the legal environment for the media, including penalties for press offenses, state monopolies, and the independence of regulatory bodies.

Examples Relevant to India: Use of laws like **sedition (IPC Sec 124A)**, **defamation (IPC Sec 499)**, and the **IT Act** to target journalists.



Economic Context

Examines economic constraints, such as concentration of media ownership, and the influence of business interests on editorial content.

Examples Relevant to India: High concentration of media ownership in a few corporate houses, and revenue models heavily dependent on corporate and government advertising.



Sociocultural Context

Measures social and cultural constraints, such as pressure from religious or ethnic groups, that lead to **self-censorship** on sensitive topics.

Examples Relevant to India: Social media trolling and harassment of journalists, particularly women, and pressure from community groups on reporting sensitive social issues.



Safety

Quantifies abuses, violence, and threats against journalists (including **murder, detention, and psychological harm**) from **state and non-state actors**.

Examples Relevant to India: Physical attacks on journalists covering protests or sensitive stories, and online harassment campaigns.

Critique of the Index

The index's methodology has faced criticism for its reliance on perception-based surveys from an anonymous group of experts, which introduces a risk of **subjective and ideological bias**.

Constitutional and Legal Framework for Press Freedom in India

The **freedom of the press** in India is a **constitutionally guaranteed right**, derived from the broader **right to freedom of speech and expression**.

Article 19(1)(a)

The Constitution of India, in **Article 19(1)(a)**, guarantees all citizens the **"right to freedom of speech and expression"**. While the term **"freedom of the press"** is not explicitly mentioned, the Supreme Court of India has, through numerous judgments, affirmed that it is an integral part of this **fundamental right**.

This right includes the freedom to propagate ideas, publish, circulate, and even the right to know and obtain information.

Article 19(2) - Reasonable Restrictions

This freedom is not absolute. The Constitution itself provides for its limitation under **Article 19(2)**, which permits the state to impose **"reasonable restrictions"** on specific grounds. The term **"reasonable restrictions"** is the central battleground for press freedom in India.

Grounds for Reasonable Restrictions

- **Sovereignty and integrity of India**
- **Security of the State**
- **Friendly relations with foreign States**
- **Public order**
- **Decency or morality**
- **Contempt of court**
- **Defamation**
- **Incitement to an offence**

It is noteworthy that the grounds of "public order," "friendly relations with foreign states," and "incitement to an offence" were not in the original Constitution but were added by the **First Constitutional Amendment Act, 1951**, to grant the state more power to regulate speech.

May 4-5, 2025: Civil Defence, Education, and Economic Policy

Civil Defence Preparedness and Disaster Management

Discussions on civil defence preparedness underscore a critical evolution in India's national security paradigm. The framework has expanded from its traditional wartime role to become an integral component of the country's **disaster management** apparatus.

Legislative and Institutional Framework

The Civil Defence Act, 1968

This is the primary legislation governing civil defence in India. The Act was a product of the post-war period, initially defining civil defence as any measure "not amounting to actual combat" for protecting people and property against a "hostile attack".

Integration with the Disaster Management Act, 2005

The Civil Defence framework is now deeply integrated with the institutional structure established by the **Disaster Management Act, 2005**. This Act created a multi-tiered system to manage disasters in a holistic and coordinated manner.



The 2009 Amendment

A pivotal amendment in **2009** expanded the definition of civil defence to include measures for '**disaster management**'. This change was a direct legislative response to the growing recognition of natural and man-made disasters as significant national security threats.

The **National Policy on Disaster Management (NPDM), 2009**, further cemented this integration by explicitly aiming to strengthen the Civil Defence setup to supplement local response and relief efforts.

Disaster Management Institutional Structure

| Level | Key Authority | Chairperson | Key Functions |
|----------|--|--|--|
| National | National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) | Prime Minister | Lays down policies, plans, and guidelines for disaster management; approves the National Plan. |
| State | State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA) | Chief Minister | Lays down the state disaster management policy and plan; coordinates the implementation of the state plan. |
| District | District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) | District Magistrate / Collector | Acts as the district planning, coordinating, and implementing body for disaster management; ensures that guidelines from NDMA and SDMA are followed. |

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: Key Reforms

The **National Education Policy 2020** represents a comprehensive vision for transforming India's education sector. Its recommendations are a direct policy response to the challenge of leveraging India's "demographic dividend" by addressing critical issues of poor learning outcomes and low employability.

Key Recommendations of NEP 2020

School Education

New Pedagogical Structure

The rigid 10+2 structure is replaced with a 5+3+3+4 design, corresponding to ages 3-8, 8-11, 11-14, and 14-18 years respectively.

Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)

The policy accords the highest priority to achieving universal **FLN** in primary school by **2025** through a **National Mission on Foundational Literacy and Numeracy**.

Holistic, Multidisciplinary Education

There will be no rigid separations between arts and sciences, curricular and extracurricular activities, or vocational and academic streams.

Medium of Instruction

The policy emphasizes the use of the mother tongue, local, or regional language as the medium of instruction at least until Grade 5.

Assessment Reforms

A shift from **summative assessment** to regular, **formative**, and **competency-based assessment** is envisaged.

Higher Education

Flexibility and Multidisciplinary

The policy promotes broad-based, multidisciplinary undergraduate education with flexible curricula and multiple entry and exit points.

Academic Bank of Credits (ABC)

An **ABC** will be established to digitally store academic credits earned from various institutions.

Single Regulator

A single overarching umbrella body, the **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)**, will be set up for all higher education.

Fostering Research

A **National Research Foundation (NRF)** will be created as an apex body to foster a strong research culture.

lovepreet's IAS Niti

Trade Policy and Economic Reforms

Discussions on trade policy and economic reforms are central to India's growth strategy. Key reforms in recent years have focused on liberalizing the external sector and improving the domestic business environment.

These include reductions in **tariffs**, simplification of import licensing, relaxation of controls on **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**, and the implementation of the **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** and the **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)** to create a more efficient and transparent economic system.

May 6, 2025: Geopolitics, Space, and Biotechnology

Indus Waters Treaty: Renewed Focus Amid Tensions

The **Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)**, a landmark **water-distribution agreement** between **India** and **Pakistan**, has come under renewed focus amid heightened border tensions following "Operation Sindoor." Fresh talks on water-sharing highlight the treaty's resilience as a mechanism for cooperation, even during periods of conflict.

Treaty Provisions

Signed on **September 19, 1960**, and brokered by the **World Bank**, the **IWT** is essentially a partitioning agreement for the rivers of the **Indus system**. It allocates control over the waters of the **six rivers** as follows:

| River Category | Rivers | Allocated to | Rights for the Other Country |
|----------------|------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| Eastern Rivers | Ravi, Beas, Sutlej | India | For unrestricted use. |
| Western Rivers | Indus, Jhelum, Chenab | Pakistan | India is permitted limited use for domestic, non-consumptive (e.g., run-of-the-river hydropower), and specified agricultural purposes . |

This division gives **India** control over approximately **20%** of the total water carried by the **Indus system**, while **Pakistan** controls about **80%**.

Dispute Resolution Mechanism of the Indus Waters Treaty

Permanent Indus Commission (PIC)

The first port of call for any issue. It comprises a commissioner from each country and is mandated to exchange data and cooperate on water-related matters.

Neutral Expert

If the PIC cannot resolve a "difference" (typically a technical issue regarding project design), either party can request the **World Bank** to appoint a **Neutral Expert** for a determination.

Court of Arbitration (CoA)

For "disputes" (broader issues involving treaty interpretation), the matter can be referred to a seven-member **Court of Arbitration** for a final and binding decision.

Recent disagreements, such as those over India's Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects, have tested this mechanism, with Pakistan approaching the CoA and India preferring the Neutral Expert route, leading to procedural deadlocks.

ISRO Update: Gaganyaan Mission's Parachute System

The **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** announced a successful test of an **advanced capsule parachute system**, a critical milestone for the **Gaganyaan mission**, India's inaugural **human spaceflight program**.

The mission aims to demonstrate the capability to launch a crew of three members into a **400 km Low Earth Orbit (LEO)** for a **three-day mission** and bring them back safely to Earth.

Key Technologies and Components of Gaganyaan Mission



Launch Vehicle - HLVM3

The mission will use a human-rated version of the **LVM3 rocket**, named **HLVM3** (Human-rated LVM3). This reliable heavy-lift vehicle is being modified to meet stringent safety and reliability standards required for carrying astronauts.



Crew Escape System (CES)

A crucial safety feature, the **CES** is designed to rapidly and safely eject the **Crew Module** away from the launch vehicle in case of an emergency during launch or ascent.



Orbital Module

This comprises the **Crew Module** (the habitable space for the astronauts with its own life support system) and the **Service Module** (which contains propulsion, power, and other support systems).



Parachute System

The successful test of the **parachute system** is vital for the safe deceleration and splashdown of the **Crew Module** upon re-entry into Earth's atmosphere.

The **Gaganyaan program** is a cornerstone of India's broader space ambitions, which include establishing an **indigenous space station** by **2035** and landing an Indian on the **Moon** by **2040**.

Key Technologies and Components of Gaganyaan Mission



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Regulatory Framework for Genetically Engineered Organisms in India

Governing Law

Genetically engineered organisms in India are regulated under the "Rules for the Manufacture, Use, Import, Export & Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms, Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells, 1989," notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Apex Body

The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC), under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, is the apex body responsible for approving the commercial release of GM crops.

Recent Policy Shift

Recognizing the difference between GMOs and certain genome-edited products, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change issued a notification in March 2022.

This notification exempts genome-edited plants falling under the SDN-1 and SDN-2 categories (which are free of foreign DNA) from the stringent regulatory process applicable to transgenic GMOs.

Such products will now be certified by the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBSC), significantly speeding up the approval process for research and commercialization.

This move aligns India with several other countries that have adopted a more liberal regulatory approach for genome-edited crops that do not contain foreign genes.

May 7, 2025: Trade and Development Milestones

Landmark India-UK Free Trade Agreement Concluded

India and the United Kingdom have successfully concluded a landmark Free Trade Agreement (FTA), a significant development in their bilateral economic relationship. This agreement is part of India's broader strategy to expand market access for its goods and services while attracting investment.

Understanding Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)

Definition

An **FTA** is a legally binding agreement between two or more countries to reduce or eliminate **trade barriers** such as **tariffs** (customs duties) and quotas on goods and services traded between them. The goal is to encourage international trade by making it more efficient and profitable.

Key Features

Modern FTAs are comprehensive, often including clauses on:

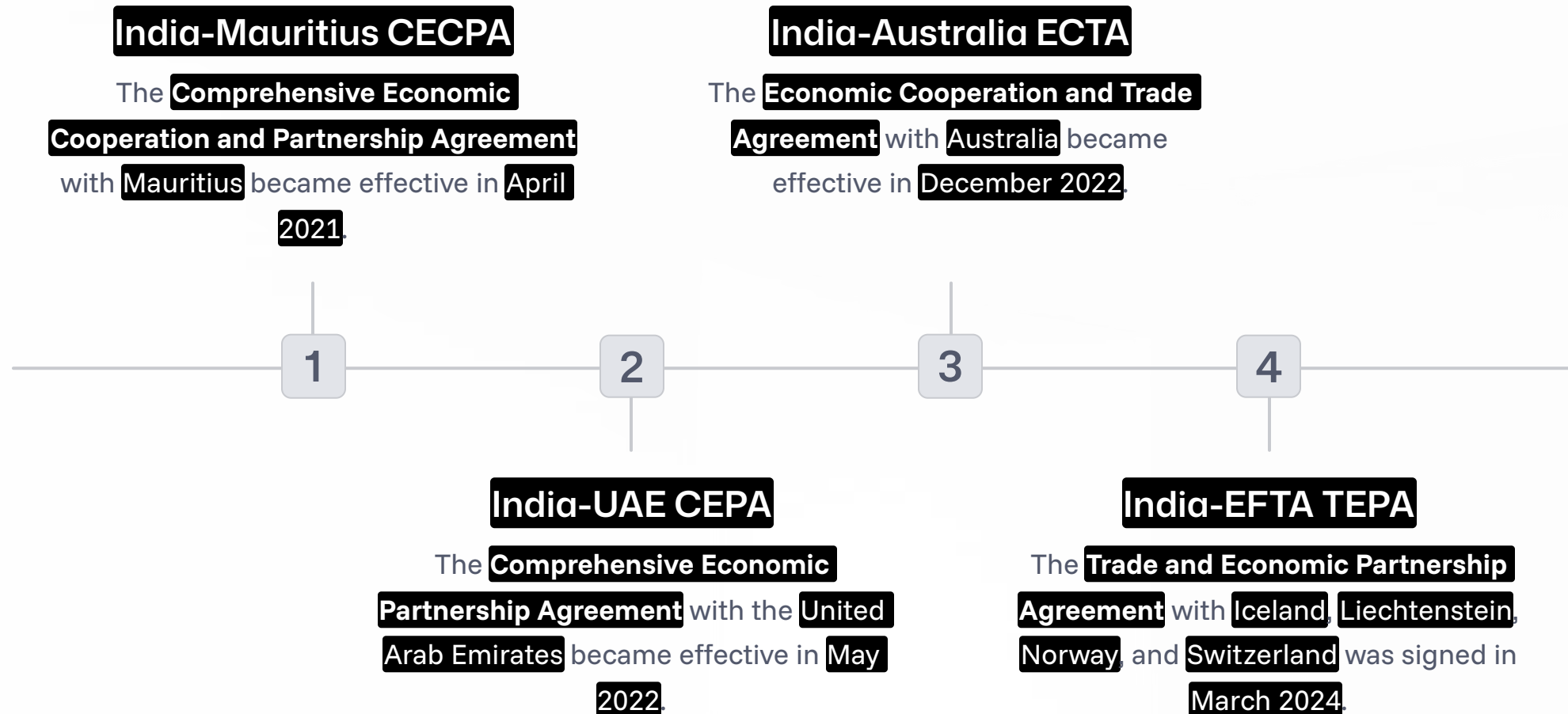
- **Trade in Goods:** Preferential tariff treatment and **rules of origin** to determine which products are eligible.
- **Trade in Services:** Easing restrictions on the supply of services in sectors like finance, IT, and professional services.
- **Investment:** Protecting and promoting investment flows between the partner countries.
- Other Areas: Intellectual property rights, government procurement, and technical standards.

WTO Context

The World Trade Organization (WTO) generally operates on the **Most-Favoured-Nation (MFN)** principle, which requires a country to grant the same trade concessions to all WTO members. FTAs are a permitted exception to this rule under **Article XXIV of the GATT**, allowing member countries to grant preferential treatment to each other.

India's Recent FTA Engagements

India has adopted a calibrated approach to negotiating **FTAs**, aiming to balance market access opportunities with the protection of domestic interests. In recent years, India has signed and implemented several key agreements:



Negotiations are also ongoing with partners like the European Union and Canada.

India's Performance in the Human Development Index (HDI)

The latest **Human Development Report**, released by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, ranked India at **130 out of 193 countries**. While the rank indicates significant room for improvement, the report noted progress in key areas like education and health.

Understanding the Human Development Index (HDI)

What is the HDI?

The HDI is a composite statistical index created to emphasize that people and their capabilities, not economic growth alone, should be the ultimate criteria for assessing a country's development. It provides a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development.

Components and Calculation

The HDI is the geometric mean of normalized indices for three fundamental dimensions.

| Dimension | Indicator | Minimum Goalpost | Maximum Goalpost |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------------|----------------------|
| A long and healthy life | Life expectancy at birth | 20 years | 85 years |
| Knowledge | 1. Expected years of schooling 2. Mean years of schooling | 0 years 0 years | 18 years 15 years |
| A decent standard of living | Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (PPP \$) | \$100 | \$75,000 |

Each indicator is converted into an index value between 0 and 1. The final HDI score is the geometric mean of these three dimension indices.

$$HDI = (I_{Health} \times I_{Education} \times I_{Income})^{1/3}$$

The use of the geometric mean reflects the view that a low achievement in one dimension is not fully compensated for by a high achievement in another, reflecting the view that these dimensions are equally important and not perfectly substitutable.

Significance

The HDI is used to capture the attention of policymakers and question national policy choices. It highlights how countries with similar GNI per capita can have vastly different human development outcomes, demonstrating that economic growth does not automatically translate into human well-being.

May 8, 2025: Security and Diplomatic Developments

"Operation Sindoor": A Punitive Counter-Terrorism Mission

In response to a major terror attack in **Pahalgam** that killed 26 civilians, the **Indian Armed Forces** launched "**Operation Sindoor**" on May 7, 2025. This operation was a calibrated, tri-services campaign designed to dismantle terrorist infrastructure in **Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK)** and deeper inside **Pakistan**.

Nature of the Operation

The operation was described as a focused, measured, and non-escalatory punitive strike. Official statements clarified that the targets were specifically terrorist camps and infrastructure, with a deliberate avoidance of Pakistani military facilities to manage escalation risks.

The operation involved precision strikes across land, air, and sea, showcasing a high degree of synergy between the **Indian Army**, **Air Force**, and **Navy**, coordinated through an **Integrated Command and Control Strategy (ICCS)**. The **Border Security Force (BSF)** also played a crucial role by thwarting infiltration attempts along the **International Border** during the operation.

India's Broader Border Management and Counter-Terrorism Strategy

Objective

The principal objective of India's **border management** is to secure the nation's borders against hostile interests while facilitating legitimate trade and commerce. This involves a multi-pronged strategy to prevent **cross-border violations**, including **terrorism**, **trafficking**, and **infiltration**.



Infrastructure Development

Under the **Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM) Scheme**,

India is investing heavily in physical and technological infrastructure. This includes the construction of border fences, floodlighting, roads, and Border Out Posts (BOPs).



Technological Solutions

For difficult terrains where physical fencing is not feasible, India is deploying the **Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS)**. CIBMS, also known as "**smart fencing**," integrates advanced surveillance technologies like sensors, radars, thermal imagers, and drones into a **unified command and control network**.



Zero Tolerance Policy

India maintains a "**zero tolerance**" policy towards **terrorism** and actively raises the issue of **cross-border terrorism** in bilateral and multilateral forums.

Kartarpur Corridor Closed Amid Escalations

As a direct consequence of the heightened border tensions, the **Kartarpur Corridor**, a symbol of cross-border religious diplomacy, was temporarily closed.

Kartarpur Corridor: Location and Significance



Location

The **Kartarpur Corridor** is a **visa-free border crossing** that connects two historically significant **Sikh gurdwaras**:

- **Dera Baba Nanak Sahib** in **Gurdaspur district of Punjab, India**
- **Gurdwara Darbar Sahib** in **Kartarpur, Narowal district of Punjab, Pakistan**

Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur holds immense religious importance as it is built on the site where the founder of Sikhism, **Guru Nanak Dev**, settled and spent the last 18 years of his life.

A "Corridor of Hope"

The corridor, inaugurated in **November 2019**, allows Indian pilgrims to visit the shrine in Pakistan, located just **4.7 km** from the international border, without requiring a visa.

The corridor has been hailed as a significant confidence-building measure between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. It has been described as a "**corridor of hope**" and compared to the fall of the Berlin Wall, symbolizing the potential for people-to-people contact and religious harmony to transcend political conflict.

Its closure, even if temporary, underscores the fragility of such initiatives in the face of security escalations.

May 9, 2025: Legal Rulings and Green Finance

Supreme Court Ruling on Rohingya Deportation

The Supreme Court of India issued crucial guidelines concerning the deportation of **Rohingya refugees**, navigating the complex intersection of international humanitarian principles and national law.

India's Legal Framework for Refugees

Non-Signatory Status

India is not a signatory to the **1951 Refugee Convention** or its **1967 Protocol**. Consequently, it does not have a formal national refugee protection framework and is not legally bound by the definition of "refugee" or the specific obligations outlined in the convention.

Governing Laws

In the absence of a specific refugee law, all foreigners, including **asylum-seekers** and refugees, are governed by general laws such as the **Foreigners Act, 1946**, and the **Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920**. These laws do not differentiate between refugees fleeing persecution and other foreigners, often categorizing them as "illegal immigrants".

Ad Hoc Approach

India's refugee policy has historically been ad hoc, based on administrative and political considerations. The government has granted protection and assistance to large groups like **Tibetan** and **Sri Lankan Tamil refugees**, while others, such as those from Myanmar and Afghanistan, are dealt with under the mandate of the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**.

The Principle of Non-Refoulement

Definition

Non-refoulement is a fundamental principle of international law, most prominently enshrined in **Article 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention**. It prohibits states from returning a refugee or asylum-seeker to a territory where their life or freedom would be threatened on account of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group.

Status in International Law

This principle is widely considered to have attained the status of **customary international law**, making it binding on all states, including non-signatories to the **Refugee Convention**.

It is also implicitly supported by other international treaties to which **India** is a party, such as the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**.

India's Position and Judicial Interpretation

While the executive branch has often asserted its sovereign right to deport illegal foreigners, the Indian judiciary has, in several cases, interpreted the **Right to Life and Personal Liberty under Article 21** of the Constitution to be applicable to all persons within India's territory, including refugees.

Courts have at times stayed deportations by implicitly invoking the principle of **non-refoulement**, linking it to the protections under **Article 21**. The Supreme Court's latest guidelines continue this tradition of judicial balancing, attempting to harmonize national security concerns with humanitarian obligations.

Draft Climate Taxonomy for Green Investment

India released a **draft climate taxonomy**, a critical step towards channeling investment into sustainable projects and combating **greenwashing**.

Climate or Green Taxonomy

Definition

A **taxonomy**, in the context of **sustainable finance**, is a **classification system** that identifies economic activities, assets, or projects that contribute to specific **environmental objectives**, such as **climate change mitigation** or adaptation.

Purpose

Its primary purpose is to create a common language and a clear, **science-based definition** of what is "sustainable". This helps to:

- **Guide Investment**: Provide a strong signal to investors, helping them identify and direct capital towards **green projects**.
- **Prevent Greenwashing**: Protect investors from misleading claims by companies about the environmental benefits of their activities.
- **Enhance Transparency**: Promote standardized disclosure and reporting, allowing for better comparison and assessment of green investments.
- **Support Policy Goals**: Align financial flows with national and international **climate commitments**, such as those under the **Paris Agreement**.

Global Context and the EU Taxonomy

The **European Union** has been a pioneer in this area with the **EU Taxonomy**, which is considered the most sophisticated framework to date. It establishes **technical screening criteria** for economic activities across six environmental objectives:

1. **Climate change mitigation**
2. **Climate change adaptation**
3. Sustainable use of water
4. Transition to a circular economy
5. Pollution prevention
6. Protection of biodiversity

An activity must substantially contribute to at least one of these objectives while doing "**no significant harm**" (**DNSH**) to the others to be considered taxonomy-aligned. **India's draft taxonomy** is expected to be tailored to its **national context**, potentially including a focus on the **transition of carbon-intensive sectors**, which is crucial for emerging economies.

May 10, 2025: IMF Decision and Himalayan Pollution

India Abstains from IMF Vote on Pakistan Aid

India abstained from a crucial vote at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) regarding an aid package for Pakistan. This decision reflects the complex geopolitical and economic considerations influencing India's stance in multilateral financial institutions.

IMF Quotas and Voting Power

Quota System

The IMF's financial and governance structure is built on a system of quotas. A member country's quota broadly reflects its relative economic position in the world. Quotas are denominated in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), the IMF's unit of account.

Functions of Quotas

Quotas determine a member's:

- **Financial Contribution:** The maximum amount of resources a member must provide to the IMF.
- **Access to Financing:** The amount of financing a member can obtain from the IMF.
- **Voting Power:** This is a key determinant of a country's influence in IMF decision-making.

Calculation of Votes

A member's total votes are the sum of its basic votes (distributed equally among all members) and quota-based votes (one vote for each SDR 100,000 of quota). Over time, as quotas have increased, the share of basic votes has diminished, thereby increasing the influence of countries with larger quotas.

Decision Making at the IMF and India's Position

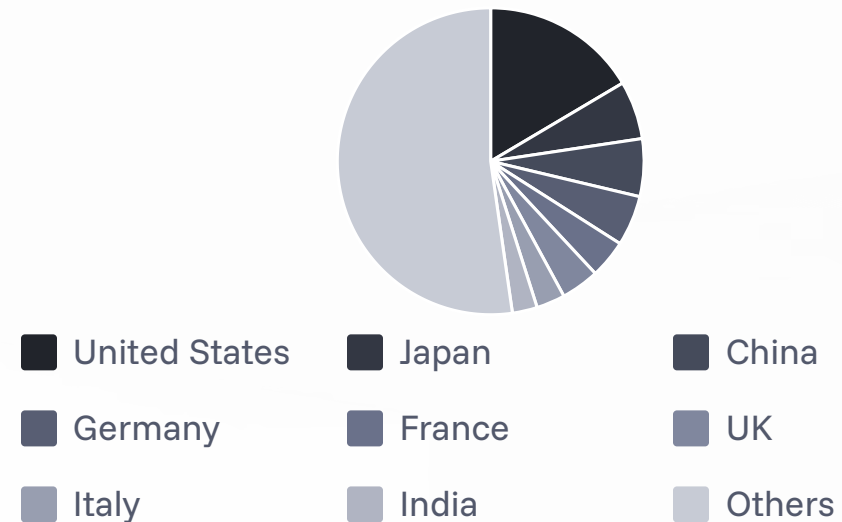
Decision Making

Most major decisions at the IMF, including changes in quotas, require an **85% supermajority** of the total voting power. This gives the United States, with a voting share of over 16%, a de facto veto power.

India's Position in the IMF

As of early 2025, India holds a quota of SDR 13,114.4 million, which translates to a 2.75% quota share and a 2.63% voting share. This places India among the top ten shareholders but significantly behind countries like the US (17.4% quota, 16.49% vote) and China (6.4% quota, 6.08% vote).

India, along with other emerging economies, has been advocating for reforms in the quota system to better reflect the current global economic realities.



Alarming Levels of Plastic Pollution in the Himalayas

A new study revealed alarming levels of **plastic pollution** in the Himalayan ecosystem, highlighting a severe environmental threat to this fragile region.

Nature of the Plastic Pollution Problem in the Himalayas

The **Himalayan region** is facing a deepening crisis where over 80% of plastic waste originates from **single-use food and beverage packaging**. A staggering 70-71% of this waste is non-recyclable multi-layered plastic (MLP). The primary sources are tourism, changing consumption patterns, and **inadequate waste management infrastructure** in remote mountain areas.

Environmental and Ecological Impacts of Himalayan Plastic Pollution

Microplastic Contamination

The degradation of larger plastic items leads to the formation of **microplastics**, which are now found pervasively in Himalayan mountains, **rivers (like the Ganga)**, lakes, and even glaciers.

These **microplastics** are released into river systems during snowmelt, contaminating freshwater sources for downstream communities. Studies on rivers like the **Ganga** have found significant **microplastic concentrations**, with fibers and fragments of **polyethylene (PE)** and **polypropylene (PP)** being dominant.

Impact on Biodiversity

Unscientific plastic disposal causes soil and water pollution, threatening the region's unique **biodiversity**. Wildlife, such as Himalayan brown bears and Greater adjutant storks, have been observed foraging in open garbage dumps, ingesting plastic waste which can be fatal.

Aesthetic and Cultural Degradation

The accumulation of **plastic waste** mars the natural beauty of the Himalayas, impacting tourism and the cultural values tied to these pristine landscapes.

May 11, 2025: Defence Technology and Monsoon Forecast

Indian Army Neutralizes Kamikaze Drones on the Border

The **Indian Army** successfully neutralized multiple **kamikaze drones** on the border, showcasing its growing capabilities in countering modern aerial threats.

What are Kamikaze Drones?

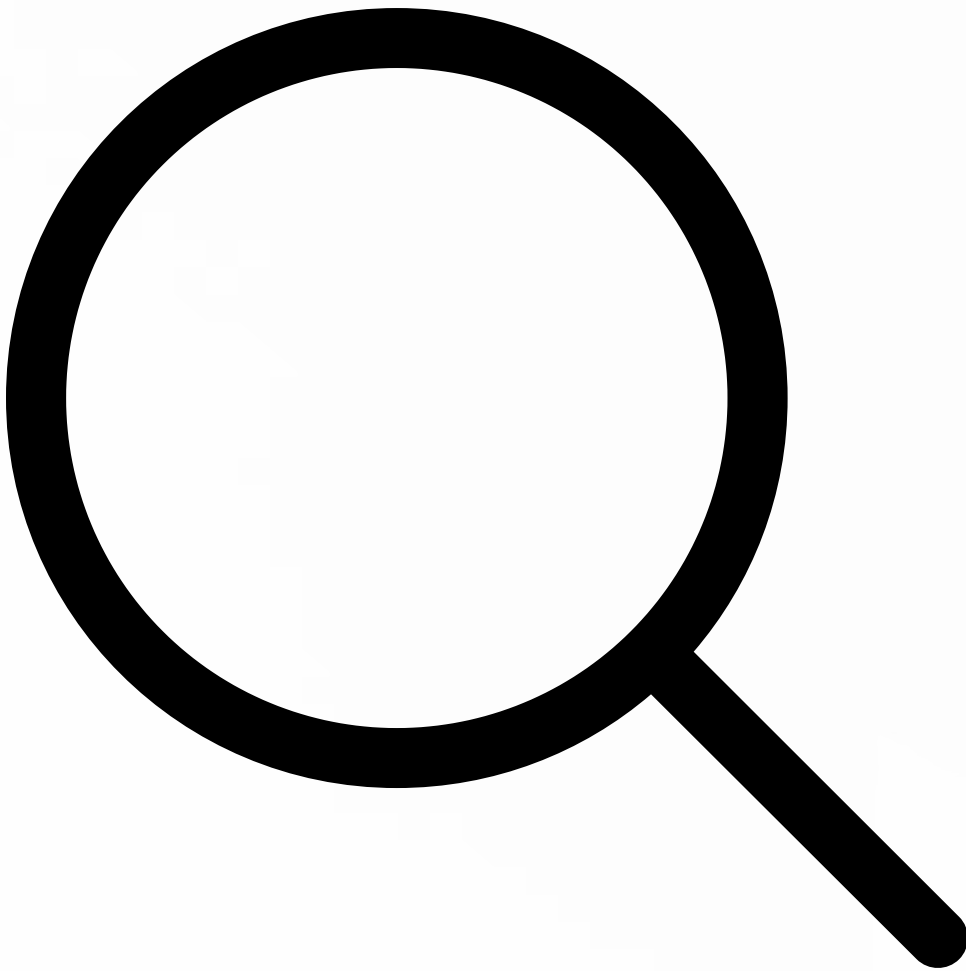
Definition

Also known as **loitering munitions** or "suicide drones," these are **unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)** equipped with an **integrated warhead**. They are designed for a one-way mission.

Operational Use

Unlike traditional surveillance drones that return to base, a **kamikaze drone** loiters over a target area, identifies a target using its onboard sensors, and then crashes into it, detonating its payload upon impact. This combines the capabilities of **surveillance and precision strike** into a single, expendable platform.

Key Features and Tactical Advantages of Kamikaze Drones



Precision and Low Collateral Damage

Equipped with advanced optics and, increasingly, **AI-powered targeting systems**, they can strike specific targets like tanks, artillery positions, or command posts with high accuracy, minimizing damage to surrounding areas.

Loitering Capability

They can remain airborne for extended periods, allowing operators to wait for the opportune moment to strike or to identify **high-value, time-sensitive targets** that may only be exposed briefly.



Cost-Effectiveness

They are significantly cheaper to produce and deploy than conventional guided missiles or manned aircraft, making them an attractive option for **asymmetric warfare**.



Reduced Risk to Personnel

As unmanned systems, they eliminate the risk to human pilots.



Stealth and Surprise

Their small size, low-altitude flight profile, and low radar signature make them difficult to detect and intercept, allowing for **surprise attacks**.



Anti-Jamming Capabilities

Modern variants are equipped with **anti-jamming antennas** and **encrypted communication links** to operate effectively in environments with heavy **electronic warfare**.

IMD Monsoon Forecast

The **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** issued its forecast, predicting the onset of the **southwest monsoon** over Kerala around **May 27**.

Mechanism of the Indian Monsoon

The **Indian monsoon** is a complex seasonal phenomenon driven primarily by the **differential heating and cooling** of land and sea.



Summer Heating

During summer, the intense heating of the **Indian landmass**, particularly the **Tibetan Plateau**, creates a strong **low-pressure zone**.



High Pressure over Ocean

In contrast, the surrounding **Indian Ocean** remains relatively cooler, forming a **high-pressure area**.



Wind Reversal

This **pressure gradient** causes a complete **reversal of wind direction**. **Moisture-laden winds** from the high-pressure zone over the ocean are drawn towards the low-pressure zone over the land.



Role of ITCZ

The **northward shift** of the **Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ)** over the **Gangetic plain** in summer acts as the **monsoon trough**, which is the ultimate destination for these winds.

Other Factors

The monsoon's onset, intensity, and distribution are influenced by several other factors, including the position of the **Subtropical Westerly Jet Stream** and the formation of the **Tropical Easterly Jet Stream** (also known as the **Somali Jet**), which is held responsible for the "burst" of the monsoon. **Oceanic phenomena** like the **El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO)** and the **Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)** also have a significant impact.

Role of the IMD in Forecasting

Nodal Agency

Established in **1875**, the **IMD** is the principal government agency under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences** responsible for **meteorological observations**, **weather forecasting**, and **seismology**.

Evolution of Forecasting

IMD's forecasting methods have evolved from early statistical models based on single parameters like snow cover to sophisticated **Dynamical Models** that simulate complex atmosphere-ocean interactions.

Under the **National Monsoon Mission (2012)**, the IMD has adopted a **Multi-Model Ensemble (MME)** approach, which combines outputs from various global climate models to improve accuracy.

Types of Forecasts

IMD provides forecasts at various scales:

- **Long-range seasonal forecasts** (issued in April and June)
- **Short-range forecasts** for the next few days
- **Nowcasts** for **extreme weather events**

It also provides crucial **agrometeorological advisories** to farmers in collaboration with the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**.

May 12, 2025: Demographics and Social Policy

Debate on **Caste Census** for **Welfare Targeting**

Parliament witnessed a debate on the necessity of a nationwide caste census, with proponents arguing it is essential for effective targeting of **welfare schemes** and for ensuring equitable representation.

History of **Caste Census** in **India**

Colonial Era

1

The British colonial administration conducted the first synchronous decennial census in **1881** and regularly collected caste data until the **1931 Census**. This data was used for administrative purposes and revealed the stark dominance of upper castes in society and government.

The **1931 census** is the last comprehensive, publicly available data on the population of various castes, particularly the **Other Backward Classes (OBCs)**.

Mandal Commission

3

The **Mandal Commission**, in its **1980 report**, famously relied on the **1931 census data** to estimate the OBC population at **52%**, which formed the basis for its recommendation of **27% reservation** in government jobs and education.

2

Post-Independence

After 1947, the Government of India decided to discontinue the practice of a full caste enumeration in the regular census, starting from the **1951 census**. The rationale was that counting caste might perpetuate and entrench caste divisions.

Since then, the census has only collected and published data for **Scheduled Castes (SCs)** and **Scheduled Tribes (STs)**.

The Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) 2011

Objective

In **2011**, the government conducted the **SECC**, the first major exercise to collect **caste data** since **1931**. Unlike the regular census conducted under the **Census Act, 1948** (which keeps individual data confidential), the **SECC** was intended to use the data for identifying beneficiaries of government schemes.

Methodology

The **SECC** was conducted door-to-door and was the first paperless census in India, using hand-held electronic devices. It used a multi-stage process to identify the poor, based on:

- **Automatic exclusion** (14 parameters)
- **Automatic inclusion** (5 parameters like households without shelter, manual scavengers)
- **Deprivation indicators** (7 parameters for remaining households)

Status of Data

While the **socio-economic data** from the **SECC** was released and is used for various welfare schemes (like **PM-JAY**), the **raw caste data was never officially published**.

The government cited issues of **data accuracy** and the complexity of consolidating the nearly 4.6 million different caste, sub-caste, and clan names recorded by enumerators.

Census vs. Sample Survey

The debate also touches upon the methodology of data collection. A census collects data from every single individual or unit in the entire population, providing a complete and highly accurate count. In contrast, a **sample survey** collects data from a small, representative subset of the population, providing an estimate with a margin of sampling error.

Comparison of **Census** and **Sample Survey** Methodologies

| Feature | Census | Sample Survey |
|-------------|--|--|
| Coverage | Collects data from every single individual or unit in the entire population. | Collects data from a small, representative subset of the population. |
| Accuracy | Provides a complete and highly accurate count. Prone to non-sampling errors (e.g., data entry mistakes) due to large scale. | Provides an estimate with a margin of sampling error . Can be more accurate if well-designed, as non-sampling errors are easier to control. |
| Cost & Time | Very expensive and time-consuming, often taking years to complete. | Significantly cheaper and faster, allowing for more frequent data collection. |
| Suitability | Suitable for small populations or when detailed information on every unit is legally required (e.g., national population count). | Suitable for large populations where a full census is impractical. Used for most research and policy analysis. |

India's Declining **Total Fertility Rate**

Data indicates that India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has fallen to near replacement levels, a significant demographic milestone with long-term implications for the country's population structure and economy.

Understanding Total Fertility Rate (TFR)

What is Total Fertility Rate (TFR)?

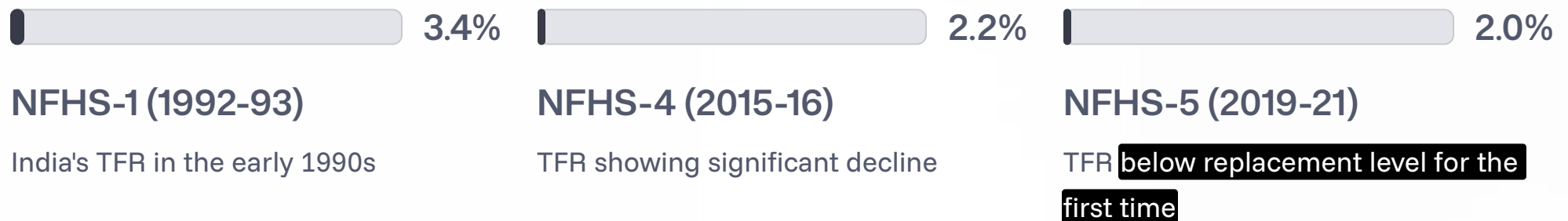
Definition

TFR is a standard demographic indicator that represents the average number of children a woman would have in her lifetime if she were to experience the current **age-specific fertility rates** throughout her reproductive years (typically ages 15-49).

Replacement Level Fertility

This is the TFR at which a **population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next, without migration**. This level is approximately **2.1 children per woman**. The "0.1" accounts for the possibility of death before reaching reproductive age.

India's TFR Trends (Based on National Family Health Survey - NFHS)



Regional Variations

While the national average is below replacement level, there are significant variations among states. Many southern and western states have had low TFRs for years, while some northern states like **Bihar (3.0)**, **Uttar Pradesh (2.35)**, and **Jharkhand (2.3)** still have TFRs above the replacement level, though they are also declining.

Implications and the Demographic Transition Model

Demographic Transition

India's falling TFR is a classic sign of it progressing through the **demographic transition model**.

This model describes the historical shift from high birth and death rates in pre-industrial societies to low birth and death rates in developed societies.

India is firmly in **Stage 3**, where the birth rate starts to fall, leading to a slowing of population growth.

Population Momentum

Even with a TFR below 2.1, India's population will continue to grow for several decades. This phenomenon, known as **population momentum**, occurs because a large cohort of young people from the high-fertility past are now entering their reproductive years.

Aging Population

A sustained low TFR will eventually lead to an **aging population**, where the proportion of elderly people increases relative to the working-age population. This will have significant long-term implications for the economy, healthcare systems, and social security schemes.

Nuclear Policy

India Reaffirms "No First Use" Nuclear Policy

The Prime Minister made a strong statement reaffirming India's commitment to its **nuclear doctrine**, declaring that the country will not yield to "nuclear blackmail." This reiteration underscores the core principles that guide India's posture as a **nuclear-weapon state**.

India's Nuclear Doctrine

Formally announced by the **Cabinet Committee on Security** in **January 2003**, India's nuclear doctrine is built on two central pillars: **No First Use (NFU)** and **Credible Minimum Deterrence**.

No First Use (NFU)

This is a pledge that India will not be the first to initiate a nuclear strike in a conflict. Nuclear weapons will only be used in **retaliation against a nuclear attack** on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere. This policy positions India's nuclear arsenal as a purely defensive tool for **deterrence**.

Credible Minimum Deterrence

This principle signifies that India will develop and maintain a nuclear arsenal that is sufficient in size and capability to inflict **unacceptable damage** on an adversary in a retaliatory strike, thereby deterring a first strike.

The term "minimum" implies that India does not seek an open-ended arms race, while "credible" means the deterrent must be survivable and effective. The doctrine states that the size of the arsenal is a dynamic concept, dependent on the strategic environment and technological imperatives.

Key Features of India's Nuclear Doctrine

| Principle | Description |
|------------------------------------|---|
| No First Use (NFU) | India will only use nuclear weapons in retaliation to a nuclear attack. This is a core tenet of its responsible nuclear power status. |
| Massive Retaliation | Any nuclear attack on India will be met with a punitive and massive retaliatory strike designed to inflict unacceptable damage on the aggressor. |
| Credible Minimum Deterrence | Maintaining a sufficient, survivable, and operationally prepared nuclear force to deter aggression. The size is not fixed but depends on the security environment. |
| Civilian Political Control | The decision to authorize the use of nuclear weapons rests solely with the civilian political leadership through the Nuclear Command Authority (NCA) . |
| Non-use Against Non-Nuclear States | India will not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against states that do not possess them. |
| Caveat for CBW Attack | The 2003 doctrine includes a significant caveat: India retains the option to retaliate with nuclear weapons in the event of a major attack against it or its forces with biological or chemical weapons . |

US-China Begin Phased Tariff Rollback

In a sign of de-escalating economic tensions, the United States and China have initiated a **phased removal of certain tariffs** that were imposed during their **trade war**.

What are Tariffs and How Do They Lead to Trade Wars?

Tariff

A **tariff** is a **tax imposed by a government on imported goods or services**. It increases the price of the imported item, making it less attractive to domestic consumers and thereby protecting domestic industries from foreign competition.

Trade War

A **trade war** is an **economic conflict** where countries retaliate against each other by raising tariffs or imposing other trade barriers. This typically begins when one country perceives another's trade practices as unfair and imposes tariffs.

The affected country then responds with its own tariffs, leading to a cycle of escalating protectionism that can disrupt global trade and harm the economies of all involved nations.

Impact of Tariffs

On Consumers

Tariffs are paid by the domestic companies that import the goods, not by the exporting country's government. These costs are often passed on to consumers in the form of **higher prices**, leading to **inflation** and reduced purchasing power.

On Domestic Industries

While tariffs can protect specific domestic industries from competition, they can also harm other industries that rely on imported raw materials or components, as their input costs increase.

On Global Economy

Widespread tariffs **disrupt global supply chains**, reduce overall trade volumes, and can slow down global economic growth. The role of the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** is to provide a forum for negotiating trade agreements and resolving trade disputes to prevent such conflicts.

May 14, 2025: National Infrastructure Mission

Major Approvals for Infrastructure Projects

The government announced major approvals for a new wave of projects under its integrated infrastructure development mission. This mission aims to create a holistic and multimodal connectivity network across the country, driven by key programs like **Bharatmala**, **Sagarmala**, and **PM Gati Shakti**.

Bharatmala Pariyojana

This is a centrally-sponsored and funded umbrella program for the highways sector, focusing on optimizing the efficiency of freight and passenger movement.

Objectives

To bridge critical infrastructure gaps by developing **Economic Corridors**, **Inter-Corridors**, **Feeder Routes**, **Border and International Connectivity roads**, **Coastal and Port connectivity roads**, and **Greenfield Expressways**.

The vision is to enhance connectivity to **550 district headquarters** (up from 300) and move **80% of freight traffic** to national highways.

Key Features

The program uses scientific planning through satellite mapping and freight surveys to identify optimal routes. It aims to decongest existing corridors through bypasses and ring roads and has synergy with the Sagarmala project to ensure seamless port connectivity.

Sagarmala Programme

This is the flagship program of the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways** to promote port-led development.

Objectives

To reduce logistics costs for both domestic and EXIM cargo by harnessing **India's 7,500 km coastline** and **14,500 km of navigable waterways**. The goal is to lower logistics costs from **~14% of GDP** to the global benchmark of **8%**.

Pillars of Sagarmala

The program is structured around five key pillars:



Five Pillars of Sagarmala

- **Port Modernization & New Port Development:** Enhancing capacity and efficiency of existing and new ports.
- **Port Connectivity Enhancement:** Improving the linkage of ports to the hinterland via rail, road, and inland waterways.
- **Port-led Industrialization:** Developing industrial clusters and **Coastal Economic Zones (CEZs)** near ports.
- **Coastal Community Development:** Skill development and livelihood generation for coastal communities.
- **Coastal Shipping & Inland Waterways:** Promoting the use of more efficient and sustainable modes of transport.

PM Gati Shakti - National Master Plan for Multi-modal Connectivity

Launched in **October 2021**, PM Gati Shakti is a transformative digital platform designed to institutionalize holistic planning and break down departmental silos.

PM Gati Shakti: Core Concept and Pillars

Core Concept

It is a **digital platform** that brings **16 ministries**, including Railways, Roadways, Ports, and Aviation, together for **integrated planning** and **coordinated implementation of infrastructure projects**.



Comprehensiveness

All projects in one portal



Prioritization

Cross-sectoral interaction



Optimization

Identifying **critical gaps** and **optimal routes**



Synchronization

Breaking silos



Analytical

GIS-based tools with over **200 layers**



Dynamic

Real-time monitoring via **satellite imagery**

Integration

PM Gati Shakti incorporates and provides a master plan for schemes like **Bharatmala** and **Sagarmala**, ensuring that infrastructure projects are designed and executed with a common vision to provide **seamless multimodal and last-mile connectivity**.

Comparison of Major Infrastructure Programs

| Program | Nodal Ministry | Primary Focus | Key Components |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| Bharatmala Pariyojana | Ministry of Road Transport and Highways | Road and Highway Network | Economic Corridors, Feeder Routes, Border Roads, Expressways. |
| Sagarmala Programme | Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways | Port-led Development | Port Modernization, Port Connectivity, Coastal Industrialization, Coastal Community Development. |
| PM Gati Shakti | Coordinated by DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce & Industry | Integrated Multi-modal Connectivity Planning | Digital Master Plan integrating all infrastructure ministries, GIS-based planning tools, breaking departmental silos. |

The Role of Digital Infrastructure in Economic Growth

These physical infrastructure projects are complemented by a robust push for **digital infrastructure**, which is a key enabler of **economic growth**. A well-developed digital network, including high-speed internet and digital payment systems, enhances productivity, attracts investment, and transforms sectors like e-commerce, education, and healthcare.

The **Digital India program**, with its various initiatives, serves as the backbone for this transformation, and **NITI Aayog**, as the government's apex think tank, plays a crucial role in catalyzing economic development through such integrated approaches.

International Day of Families

Focus on Health and Welfare Schemes for Families

On the **International Day of Families**, the government highlighted its flagship schemes aimed at ensuring the health, nutrition, and financial security of families across **India**.

Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)

Objective

PM-JAY is the world's largest government-funded health assurance scheme. Its primary objective is to provide financial protection against catastrophic health expenditure, which pushes nearly 6 crore Indians into poverty each year.

Key Features

- **Coverage:** Provides a health cover of **₹5 lakh per family per year** for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
- **Beneficiaries:** It targets over **12 crore poor and vulnerable families** (approximately 55 crore individuals), identified based on the deprivation and occupational criteria of the **Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2011**.
- **Cashless and Portable:** The scheme provides cashless access to healthcare services at any empanelled public or private hospital across the country. The benefits are portable nationwide.
- **Comprehensive Cover:** It covers up to 3 days of pre-hospitalization and 15 days of post-hospitalization expenses, including diagnostics and medicines. All pre-existing conditions are covered from day one, and there is no cap on family size or age.

Mission Indradhanush

Objective

Launched in **December 2014**, this is a flagship **immunization drive** aimed at increasing full immunization coverage for children up to two years of age and pregnant women. The goal is to rapidly achieve over **90% coverage** and reduce child mortality from vaccine-preventable diseases.

Phases and Evolution

The mission has been implemented in multiple phases, including **Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI)**, to target "catch-up" campaigns in districts and urban areas with low immunization coverage. It focuses on reaching the unreached in high-risk areas like **urban slums**, **construction sites**, and **remote tribal areas**.

Subsequent versions, like **IMI 3.0** and **5.0**, have addressed disruptions (like COVID-19) and expanded the scope to include children up to 5 years and integrate digital platforms like **U-WIN** for monitoring.

Vaccines Covered

The mission strengthens the **Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)**, which provides free vaccines against **12 life-threatening diseases**, including:

- **Diphtheria**
- **Pertussis**
- **Tetanus**
- **Polio**
- **Measles**
- **Rubella**
- **Hepatitis B**



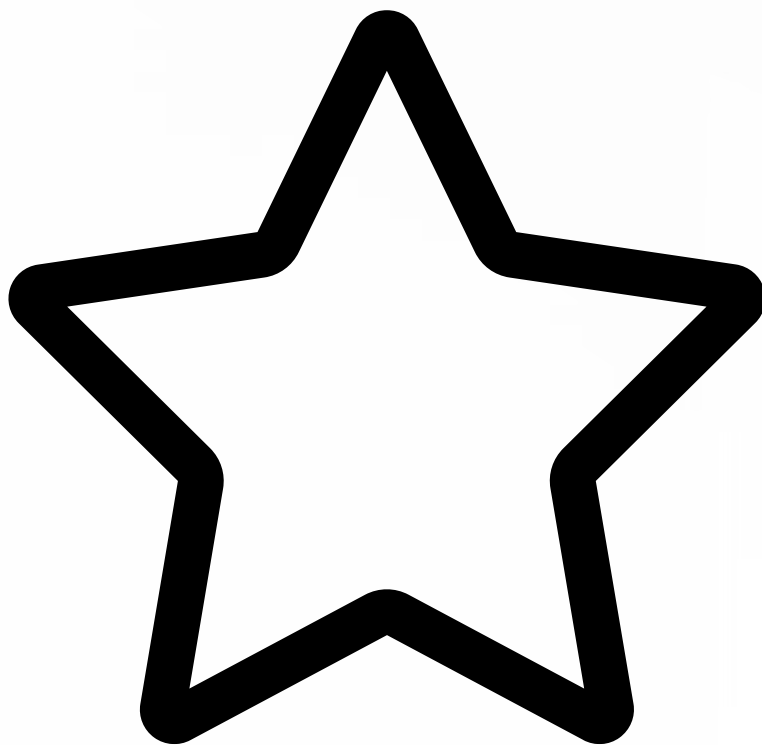
National Family Planning Programme

Historical Context

India was the **first country** in the world to launch a **national program for family planning** in **1952**. The program has evolved from a clinical, target-based approach to a more holistic one focused on reproductive health, client choice, and reducing maternal and child mortality.

Current Status and Strategy

The program now follows a **target-free approach**, emphasizing voluntary adoption of family planning methods. Key strategies include:



Expanding **Contraceptive Choices**

The basket of available contraceptives has been expanded to include new methods like injectable contraceptives (Antara) and non-hormonal weekly pills (Chhaya).



Postpartum and Post-Abortion FP

Strengthening services to capitalize on the opportunity provided by increased institutional deliveries.



Mission Parivar Vikas

This initiative focuses on 146 high-fertility districts to improve access to contraceptives and family planning services.



Community-based Distribution

Utilizing **ASHAs** for doorstep delivery of contraceptives and counseling.

May 16-19, 2025: Security, Economy, and Governance Reviews

Border Security Monitoring

Continuous monitoring of border security remains a paramount concern, especially in light of recent counterterrorism operations. India's strategy involves a combination of physical and technological measures.

Physical Infrastructure

This includes the construction of fences, floodlights, and all-weather roads along the borders under schemes like the **Border Infrastructure and Management (BIM) program**.

Technological Surveillance

The deployment of the **Comprehensive Integrated Border Management System (CIBMS)** is a key technological intervention. It uses a network of sensors, cameras, and radars to create a "smart fence" that provides 24/7 electronic surveillance, particularly in difficult terrain where physical patrolling is challenging.

Inter-Agency Coordination

Effective border management relies on close coordination between various agencies, including the **Border Security Force (BSF)**, **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**, **Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)**, **Assam Rifles**, and intelligence agencies at the central and state levels.

Key Economic Indicators

Understanding key economic indicators is crucial for assessing the health of the economy. The main indices that track industrial production and inflation are the IIP, CPI, and WPI.

| Indicator | Full Name | Published By | What it Measures | Base Year |
|-----------|--------------------------------|---|---|-----------|
| IIP | Index of Industrial Production | National Statistical Office (NSO), MoSPI | Short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products. | 2011-12 |
| CPI | Consumer Price Index | National Statistical Office (NSO), MoSPI | Changes in the retail price level of a basket of consumer goods and services. It is the primary measure of inflation used by the RBI for monetary policy. | 2012 |
| WPI | Wholesale Price Index | Office of Economic Adviser, Ministry of Commerce & Industry | Changes in the price of goods at the wholesale level (first point of bulk sale). It does not include services. | 2011-12 |

Components of IIP

The IIP is a composite index with three broad sectors:

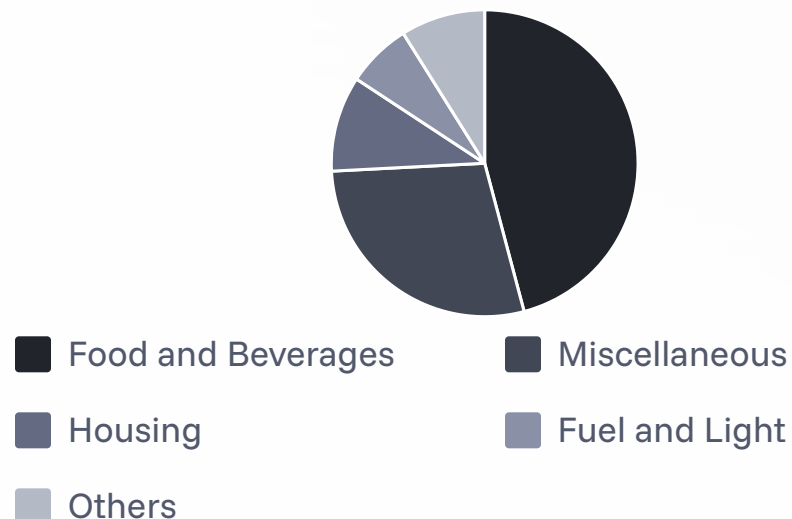
- Manufacturing:** Has the highest weightage at 77.63%.
- Mining:** Weightage of 14.37%.
- Electricity:** Weightage of 7.99%.

Within the IIP, the **Eight Core Industries** (Electricity, steel, refinery products, crude oil, coal, cement, natural gas, and fertilizers) have a combined weightage of 40.27%, making them a lead indicator of industrial performance.

Components of CPI and Administrative Reforms

Components of CPI (Combined)

The CPI basket has major categories with the following approximate weights:



Administrative Reforms

Discussions on administrative reforms centered on improving governance and public service delivery through **e-governance initiatives**, specialized tribunals, and citizen-centric frameworks.

E-Governance Initiatives

The **Digital India program** is the flagship initiative to transform **India** into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. Key platforms under this initiative include:

- **DigiLocker**: A secure cloud-based platform for the issuance, storage, sharing, and verification of digital documents and certificates.
- **UMANG** (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance): A single, unified mobile app that provides access to over 2,000 central and state government services.
- **MyGov.in**: A citizen engagement platform that facilitates a "Discuss," "Do," and "Disseminate" approach to governance.

Administrative Tribunals and Citizen's Charter

Administrative Tribunals

Constitutional Basis

Articles 323A and 323B, inserted by the 42nd Amendment Act, 1976, provide for the establishment of tribunals. Article 323A specifically empowers Parliament to create administrative tribunals for resolving disputes related to the recruitment and service conditions of public servants.

Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT)

Established under the Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985, the CAT is a specialized quasi-judicial body that adjudicates service-related disputes of Central Government employees. Its purpose is to provide speedy and inexpensive justice, thereby reducing the burden on regular courts.

Jurisdiction

CAT's jurisdiction covers All-India Services, Central civil services, and civilian employees of defence services, among others. It is guided by the principles of natural justice and is not bound by the strict procedures of the Civil Procedure Code.

Citizen's Charter

Concept

A Citizen's Charter is a document that represents a public organization's commitment to its citizens regarding the standards of service, information, grievance redressal, and transparency. It is a tool for making administration more accountable and citizen-centric.

Evolution in India

The concept was adopted in India following a Chief Ministers' Conference in 1997. The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) is the nodal agency for promoting and formulating these charters.

Core Principles

The charter is based on principles of Quality, Choice, Standards, Value, Accountability, and Transparency.

While not legally enforceable, it serves as a benchmark for service delivery.

The Sevottam Model is a service delivery excellence framework developed by DARPG that integrates the Citizen's Charter with grievance redressal and capacity building to improve public service quality.

May 20, 2025: Sports, Geopolitics, and Cybersecurity

IPL 2025 Finale: Sports Management and Economic Impact

The conclusion of the **Indian Premier League (IPL)** highlights the tournament's significant role in India's sports and economic landscape.

Structure and Regulation

Organizing Body

The **IPL** is a professional **Twenty20 (T20) cricket league** organized and governed by the **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)**. The **BCCI** is an **autonomous private body** and does not fall under the purview of India's National Sports Federation.

Governing Council

The league's functions are managed by the **IPL Governing Council**, a standing committee constituted by the **BCCI**.

Format

The tournament typically involves city-based franchise teams competing in a **double round-robin group stage** followed by a **knockout playoff format**.

Economic Impact of the IPL

1

Wealthiest League

The **IPL** is the wealthiest cricket league in the world and one of the richest sports leagues globally by per-match value.

\$6.2B

Media Rights

Value of media rights sold for the 2023-2027 cycle

\$10.9B

Total Valuation

Estimated brand value of the **IPL ecosystem**

200K+

Employment

Direct and indirect jobs created annually

Revenue Streams

Its massive revenue is generated from multiple sources, including **media rights** (sold for billions of dollars), title and associate sponsorships, franchise fees, ticket sales, and merchandise.

Economic Multiplier

The league contributes significantly to the **Indian economy** by boosting sectors like broadcasting, advertising, hospitality, and tourism, and creating numerous direct and indirect employment opportunities. The **BCCI** also shares a portion of the revenue from foreign players' salaries with their respective national cricket boards.

Gaza Conflict and India's Diplomatic Stance

The ongoing **conflict in Gaza** continues to be a major focus of international diplomacy, with **India** navigating a complex geopolitical landscape in **West Asia**.

India's Official Position on the Israel-Palestine Issue

Two-State Solution

India consistently advocates for a negotiated **two-state solution**, leading to the establishment of a sovereign, independent, and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security with Israel.

Condemnation of Terrorism and Violence

India has strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms, including the terror attacks on Israel on **October 7, 2023**. Simultaneously, it has expressed deep concern over the loss of civilian lives in the conflict and called for an immediate ceasefire, the release of all hostages, and the provision of humanitarian assistance to Gaza.

Major Cybercrime Investigation

A major **ransomware attack** prompted investigations, drawing attention to the growing threat of cybercrime in India and the legal framework in place to combat it.

De-hyphenation Policy

In recent years, India has pursued a **"de-hyphenated"** policy, engaging with Israel and Palestine independently and on their own merits, without letting its relationship with one affect the other.

This pragmatic approach allows India to maintain strong strategic and economic ties with Israel, particularly in defence and technology, while also preserving its historical and robust relationships with Arab states.

Types of Cybercrime and Legal Framework



Hacking

Unauthorized access to a computer system or network.



Phishing

Fraudulent attempts to obtain sensitive information like passwords and financial details by masquerading as a trustworthy entity.



Malware/Ransomware

Malicious software designed to disrupt operations, steal data, or, in the case of ransomware, encrypt data and demand a ransom for its release.



Identity Theft

Stealing and using someone's personal information for fraudulent purposes.



Cyberstalking and Defamation

Harassing or defaming individuals using digital platforms.

Legal Framework under the IT Act, 2000

The **Information Technology Act, 2000** is the primary legislation in India that deals with cybercrime and electronic commerce.

Key Penal Provisions

The Act defines various cyber offenses and prescribes punishments. Some crucial sections include:

- **Section 65**: Tampering with computer source documents.
- **Section 66**: Hacking with computer systems.
- **Section 66C**: Identity theft.
- **Section 66D**: Cheating by personation using a computer resource.
- **Section 66F**: Cyber terrorism.
- **Section 67, 67A, 67B**: Deal with publishing or transmitting obscene material, sexually explicit material, and child pornography in electronic form.

Data Protection and Enforcement Challenges

Data Protection

Section 43A provides for compensation for a company's failure to protect **sensitive personal data**.

Section 72A penalizes the disclosure of information in breach of a lawful contract.

Enforcement Challenges

Despite the legal framework, enforcement faces challenges like:

- **Cross-border jurisdiction**: Cybercriminals often operate from different countries, making investigation and prosecution difficult.
- **Anonymity of perpetrators**: The use of **encryption**, **VPNs**, and the **dark web** makes it challenging to identify criminals.

- **Lack of technical expertise** in law enforcement: Many police departments lack **specialized cybercrime units** with the necessary technical skills.
- **Rapid evolution of cyber threats**: Cybercriminals constantly develop new techniques, making it difficult for laws and enforcement to keep pace.

May 21-24, 2025: Pre-Prelims Focus

This period is marked by intense revision for UPSC aspirants, focusing on integrating key developments from the preceding weeks with the static syllabus. Key areas of focus include recent economic indicators, bilateral relations, and major policy initiatives.

May 29-31, 2025: Agriculture, Economy, and Policy Developments

Launch of Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA-2025)

The Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare launched the **Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan (VKSA-2025)**, a nationwide campaign aimed at agricultural modernization and farmer welfare.

Objectives and Vision

"Lab to Land": The campaign aims to realize the Prime Minister's vision of taking scientific research and modern technologies from the "lab to the land". It is a pre-Kharif season initiative designed to equip farmers with advanced knowledge and tools.

Modernization: **VKSA-2025** focuses on promoting the adoption of advanced technologies, improving access to credit, and boosting agricultural exports to make Indian agriculture a cornerstone of a **developed India (Viksit Bharat)**.

Farmer Engagement: The campaign involves a massive outreach effort, with over 2,000 teams of scientists, experts, and officials aiming to reach approximately 1.5 crore farmers across more than 700 districts.

Allied Schemes and Initiatives



Key Allied Schemes

- **PM-KISAN**: Provides income support of ₹6,000 per year in three equal installments to all landholding farmer families.
- **e-NAM**: A pan-India electronic trading portal that networks existing APMC mandis to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities.
- **Agri-Drones**: Initiatives like the **Kisan Drone Scheme** and the **Namo Drone Didi Programme** provide subsidized drones to farmers and women's Self-Help Groups.

Economic Data and Policy Debates

The latest data released by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** showed that **India's GDP growth** for the last quarter slowed to **6.5%**, the **slowest rate since the pandemic**. This economic indicator, along with new telecom subscriber data showing increasing digital penetration, provides important context for understanding India's development trajectory as the month concludes.