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**VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY**  
&  
**STUDY CENTRE**

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

**DATE: 25/06/2025 (WEDNESDAY)**



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## 1. Air India Crash Investigation: Key Highlights (AI-171 Dreamliner Incident)

### 1. What is a Black Box? (Definition and Components)

- A **black box** is a flight recording device used to investigate aircraft accidents. It includes:
  - **Flight Data Recorder (FDR):** Records technical flight data like altitude, speed, time, etc.
  - **Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR):** Captures audio from the cockpit including pilot conversations and engine sounds.
- Built to endure **extreme conditions** like high temperatures and deep water submersion.

### 2. Role of AAIB in Crash Investigation

- India's **Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB)**, under the Ministry of Civil Aviation, is conducting the probe.
- It has recovered both black boxes (on **13th and 16th June 2025**), gathered wreckage evidence, and is now preparing a **technical report**.
- The **Director General (DG)** of Civil Aviation will accept the final report before its release on the **AAIB official website**.



### 3. Legal Framework and Timelines

- The investigation follows the **Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2017**.
- These rules do **not mandate a fixed timeline**, unlike **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)** norms which demand a **preliminary report within 30 days**.
- A **high-level committee under the Home Secretary** has been tasked with producing **safety reform recommendations within 3 months**.

### 4. International Standards vs. Indian Practice

- **ICAO's Annex 13** requires:
  - Independent and transparent inquiry,
  - Public availability of final reports,
  - Strict adherence to time-bound protocols.
- Critics argue Indian investigations often **deviate** from ICAO mandates by lacking **independent inquiry** and **delays in publishing reports**.

### 5. Controversy Over Black Box Analysis

- Reports suggested India might send the **black boxes to the US**, citing insufficient domestic expertise.



- Civil Aviation Minister **K. Rammohan Naidu** denied these claims.
- A new **₹9 crore Black Box Lab in Delhi** was inaugurated in April 2025, which claims to have the technical ability to analyze such data.

### Additional Constitutional/Legal Points (UPSC Add-on)

- **Entry 29 of the Union List** in the **Seventh Schedule** of the Constitution empowers the central government to legislate on air safety.
- The **DGCA (Directorate General of Civil Aviation)** and **AAIB** are statutory regulators under the **Aircraft Act, 1934**.
- ICAO compliance is linked to **India's international treaty obligations** under the **Chicago Convention (1944)**.

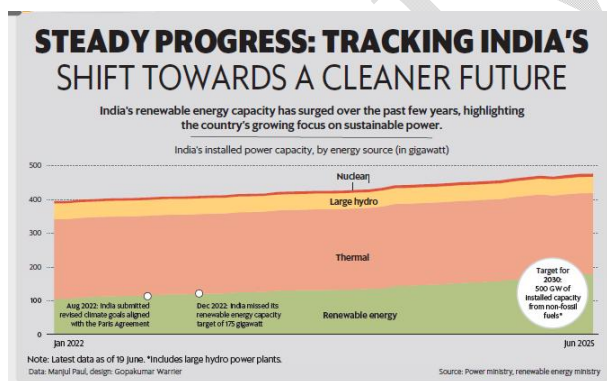
### Conclusion

The AI-171 crash has once again highlighted the **gaps between India's investigative standards and global best practices**. Strengthening institutional independence, adhering to ICAO deadlines, and leveraging new infrastructure like the **Black Box Lab** are crucial steps for ensuring **aviation safety, transparency, and accountability**. The outcome of this probe may also shape **long-term aviation reform** in India.

## 2. Steady Progress: Tracking India's Shift Towards a Cleaner Future

### 1. Rising Share of Renewable Energy in India's Power Mix

- As of **June 2025**, India has made **significant progress in expanding renewable energy (RE)** capacity.



- RE (including solar, wind, biomass, small hydro) now forms a **large and growing share** of India's **installed power capacity**, reflecting its commitment to clean energy.

### 2. Installed Power Capacity Composition (2022–2025)

- India's **total installed capacity** includes:
  - **Renewable energy** (excluding large hydro): increasing steadily.
  - **Thermal power** (coal, gas, diesel): still dominant, but relatively plateauing.
  - **Large hydro**: classified as renewable under international norms, remains stable.
  - **Nuclear power**: remains a **small but strategic contributor**.
- **Trend**: The share of **non-fossil sources** is consistently rising, aligned with India's **climate commitments**.



### 3. India's Clean Energy Goals (National & International)

- Under **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)** to the **Paris Agreement**, India pledged:
  - **50% of cumulative electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel-based sources** by 2030.
  - Reduction in **emissions intensity** of GDP by 45% from 2005 levels.
- India aims to achieve **500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity** by 2030.

### 4. Constitutional & Legal Framework Supporting Clean Energy

- **Article 48A** (Directive Principles): Obliges the State to protect and improve the environment.
- **Article 51A(g)**: Fundamental duty of citizens to protect the natural environment.
- Laws promoting clean energy and environmental conservation:
  - **Electricity Act, 2003** (with RE-specific provisions),
  - **Energy Conservation Act, 2001**,
  - **National Electricity Plan** (updated every five years by CEA),
  - **Environmental Protection Act, 1986**.

### 5. Additional Key Points for UPSC

- **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**: India-led initiative to promote global solar cooperation.
- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes**: Encouraging domestic manufacturing of solar PV modules and batteries.
- **Green Hydrogen Mission** and **PM-KUSUM Scheme** (for solar pumps) are strategic steps toward clean transition.
- India is balancing between **energy security**, **sustainability**, and **affordability** in power planning.

### Conclusion

India's shift toward renewable energy is **strategic, steady, and driven by global and domestic commitments**. While **thermal power** still plays a major role, the **growing share of renewables** and proactive **policy measures** mark a **transformative transition** towards a low-carbon future. This aligns India with **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 7 – Affordable & Clean Energy)** and strengthens its position as a responsible global climate actor.

## 3. Why West Asia Is Key for India Beyond Trade

### 1. Strategic Importance of Indian Diaspora in West Asia

- **Over 25%** of the 35 million overseas Indians reside in **West Asian nations** such as UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman.



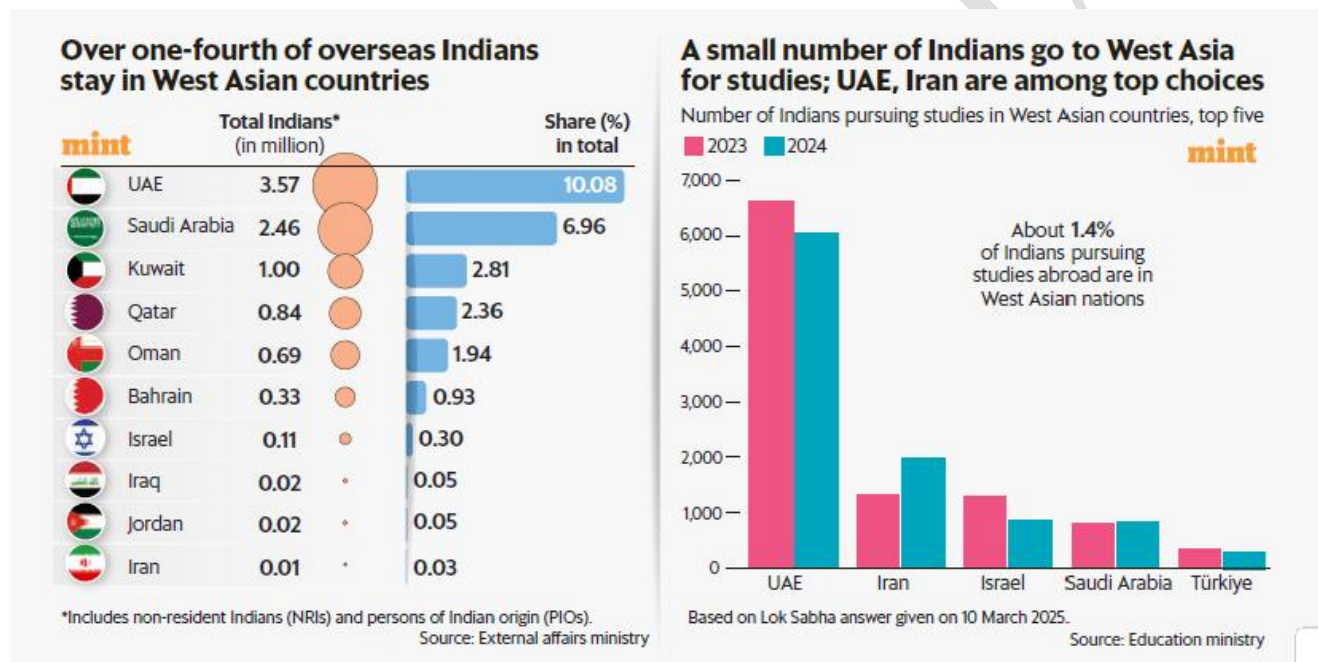


- Indian workers—mainly in **blue-collar and service sectors**—play a crucial role in both regional economies and India's inward remittances.
- **UAE alone hosts ~3.6 million Indians**, making it a major hub of India's overseas population.

## 2. Remittances: Critical Support for India's Economy

- India received **\$118 billion** in inward remittances in 2023–24.
- West Asia contributed about **38% of this total** (~\$45 billion).
  - **UAE: 19.2%, Saudi Arabia: 6.7%, Kuwait: 3.9%.**
- These remittances help **finance India's trade deficit** and serve as a **buffer during global financial shocks**.

## 3. Education Linkages and Skill Migration



- Around **11,000 Indian students** were pursuing studies in West Asia in 2024, mostly in **UAE and Iran**.
- West Asia accounts for **1.4% of Indian students abroad**, but interest is growing due to **medical and engineering programs** (especially in Iran) and **foreign universities in UAE**.
- The **UAE's Golden Visa** and tax incentives are attracting **high-skilled professionals** in sectors like IT, medicine, and finance.

## 4. Regional Instability and Strategic Risks

- Ongoing **Israel-Iran tensions** and missile strikes in **Qatar and Iraq** pose serious risks to Indian workers and students.
- Over **2,000 Indians** were evacuated under **Operation Sindhu**, indicating the **vulnerability of Indian interests** in the region.



- Conflict escalation could replicate **Ukraine-like disruptions**, where Indian student numbers dropped by 90% from 2022 to 2024.

## 5. Constitutional & Legal Relevance and Foreign Policy Tools

- **Article 51(c)** of the Indian Constitution directs the State to promote **international peace and security**.
- India maintains bilateral and multilateral ties with Gulf nations through:
  - **India-GCC Dialogue**,
  - **Strategic Partnerships** (UAE, Saudi Arabia),
  - **Evacuation Frameworks** like **Vande Bharat** and **Operation Ganga/Sindhu**.
- The **MEA (Ministry of External Affairs)**, **RBI (for remittance monitoring)**, and **Ministry of Education** are key institutions in this context.

## Conclusion

West Asia is far more than just a trade or energy partner for India. With a **dense Indian diaspora**, **high remittance volumes**, **growing education & employment linkages**, and geopolitical volatility, the region remains **integral to India's external, economic, and strategic policy**. Ensuring peace and stability in West Asia is not only a **diplomatic necessity** but also a **domestic imperative** tied to the well-being of millions of Indians abroad and the Indian economy at large.

## 4. Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls in Bihar

### 1. What is Special Intensive Revision (SIR) and Why Is It Being Conducted?

- **SIR** is a focused electoral roll revision exercise aimed at ensuring the **inclusion of all eligible voters** and exclusion of **ineligible or non-existent entries** (e.g., deceased, migrated, illegal immigrants).
- The last such exercise in **Bihar was held in 2003**. Rising urbanization, youth eligibility, and migration trends necessitated this 2025 update.



### 2. Methodology of Revision – House-to-House Verification

- **Booth Level Officers (BLOs)** will conduct **house-to-house verification** and distribute pre-filled **Enumeration Forms (EFs)** to existing voters.
- EFs will be available both **physically and digitally (ECINET)** for convenience.
- **Booth Level Agents (BLAs)** from all recognized parties will participate to ensure **transparency and fairness**.

### 3. Constitutional & Legal Provisions Involved



- **Article 324:** Empowers the Election Commission of India (ECI) to supervise elections.
- **Article 326:** Ensures **universal adult suffrage**—every Indian citizen aged 18+ is entitled to vote unless disqualified.
- **Section 16, RP Act 1950:** Lists disqualifications from voter registration.
- **Section 23 & 24, RP Act 1950:** Enables **verification by Electoral Registration Officer (ERO)** and allows for **appeals** against ERO decisions to **District Magistrate** and **Chief Electoral Officer**.

#### 4. Grievance Redressal & Transparency Measures

- **Claims and objections** can be raised by voters or political parties against exclusions/inclusions.
- **AEROs** will inquire into such objections before decisions are finalized.
- All verifying documents (uploaded to **ECINET**) will be **restricted to authorized officials** to protect voter privacy.
- **Draft and Final Electoral Rolls** will be shared with political parties and uploaded online.

#### 5. Special Focus on Vulnerable Groups & Technology Use

- The ECI has directed BLOs and officials to ensure **no harassment** of genuine voters, especially **elderly, PwDs, poor, and illiterate citizens**.
- **Volunteers** will be deployed to assist these groups.
- Use of **digital platforms like ECINET** enhances efficiency, reduces errors, and ensures **transparent record-keeping**.

#### Conclusion

The Special Intensive Revision in Bihar is a **significant electoral reform step**, ensuring **clean, inclusive, and transparent voter rolls** ahead of future elections. It embodies India's commitment to **free and fair elections**, aligning with constitutional mandates and democratic values. Active participation from voters and political parties is **critical** to the success of this exercise.

### 5. GST Reform: Luxury Cess Merger and Elimination of 12% Slab

#### 1. Compensation Cess Likely to be Merged into GST Structure

- The **Compensation Cess**, currently levied on **luxury and sin goods** (like SUVs, tobacco, aerated drinks), may be **folded into the GST rate from April 2026**, after its current extension ends.
- Originally introduced under the **GST Compensation to States Act, 2017**, it aimed to **compensate states for GST transition revenue losses**.
- Post-pandemic, it was extended till 2026 to **repay Centre's loans to support states**.

#### 2. GST Rate Rationalization: Proposal to Eliminate the 12% Slab





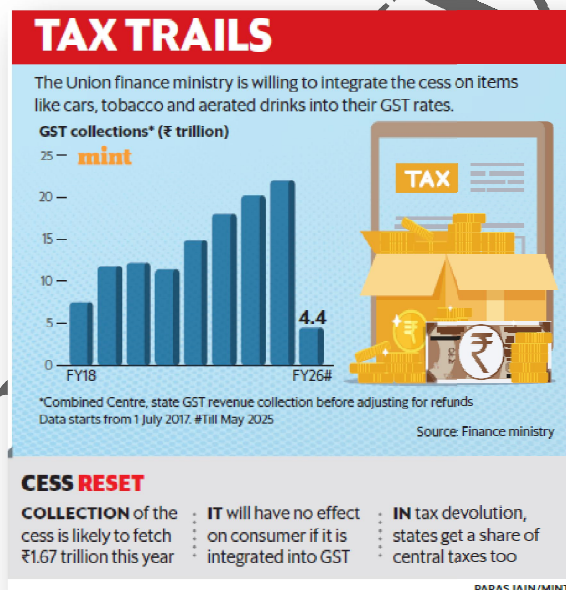
- The **12% GST slab**, which covers **intermediate-use items** like cheese, milk beverages, ₹1,000-priced apparel and clean energy devices, may be **removed**.
- These items could be moved to the **5% or 18% slabs**, depending on essentiality and impact on consumer affordability.
- This move is intended to **reduce classification confusion, ease compliance, and simplify the GST structure** in line with **global practices**.

### 3. Fiscal Federalism and Centre–State Tax Sharing

- If cess is merged into GST, **revenue would be shared** between Centre and States under the **GST sharing formula** recommended by the **Finance Commission** (currently 41% of central tax revenues go to states).
- The decision may influence the **16th Finance Commission's (SFC) recommendations** for FY27–FY32.
- States with **weak fiscal positions** may resist changes due to possible short-term revenue loss.

### 4. Legal and Constitutional Provisions Involved

- **Article 279A** of the Constitution provides for the **GST Council**, which makes recommendations on rates and cesses.
- The **Compensation Cess Act, 2017** was enacted under powers derived from **Article 246A** and **Article 269A**, allowing concurrent taxation and apportionment of GST between Centre and States.
- Any merger of cess into GST and slab changes must be approved by the **GST Council** (Centre + State consensus body).



### 5. Impact on Economy, Consumers, and Governance

- **Positive Impacts:**
  - May **lower prices** on essential items moved to 5% slab, boosting **consumption and affordability**.
  - **Improves tax transparency**, reduces **rate classification disputes**, and promotes a **predictable business climate**.
- **Risks:**
  - Goods moved to **18%** may face **price hikes**, possibly affecting **middle-income demand**.
  - States may face **short-term fiscal stress** unless compensated adequately.



## Conclusion

The proposed reforms to **integrate compensation cess into GST** and **remove the 12% slab** represent a **significant simplification** of India's indirect tax structure. This aligns with global best practices of having **fewer, harmonized tax rates**, enhancing tax compliance and governance. The challenge lies in achieving **Centre-State consensus**, ensuring **revenue neutrality**, and safeguarding **consumer interest and inflation control**, all while reinforcing the **cooperative federalism** model enshrined in India's Constitution.

## 6. India's Strategic Energy Plan Amid Strait of Hormuz Tensions

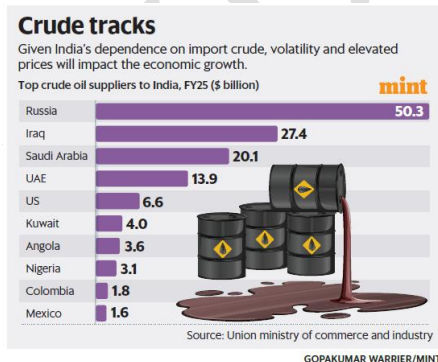
### 1. Context: Rising Risk to Energy Security in West Asia

- Amid rising tensions following the **Israel-Iran conflict**, India has activated an **emergency energy plan** to safeguard its oil imports.
- The **Strait of Hormuz**, a chokepoint through which **~20% of global oil** passes and India receives **1.5–2 million barrels per day (mbpd)**, is at risk of closure by Iran.
- This strait is vital to India's energy security as the country **imports over 85%** of its crude oil, which constitutes **30% of its total import bill**.

### 2. Strategic Alternatives: Pipeline and Diversification Approach

- India plans to **bypass Hormuz** using two alternative pipelines:
  - UAE's Habshan-Fujairah pipeline** (360 km, 1.5 mbpd capacity).
  - Saudi Aramco's East-West pipeline** (1,200 km, 5 mbpd capacity).
- State-run Indian refiners (IOC, BPCL, HPCL) are coordinating with **Adnoc and Saudi Aramco** for emergency access.
- India is also **increasing imports from the US** and may use **routes via the Suez Canal and Cape of Good Hope** if needed.

### 3. Global Oil Volatility and Economic Implications



- Oil prices surged to nearly **\$80 per barrel** amid the conflict but later eased.
- Icra report**: Every \$10/bbl rise in global crude adds **\$13–14 billion** to India's import bill—raising **trade deficit, CAD**, and impacting **economic growth**.
- Indian markets showed resilience, reflecting confidence in supply assurances.

### 4. Strategic, Legal, and Diplomatic Dimensions

- India's policy aligns with its commitment to **energy security under Article 39(b)** of the **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)**, ensuring distribution of material resources to subserve the common good.



- The plan underscores India's **strategic oil partnerships** with Gulf countries and reflects proactive diplomacy under **Act West Policy**.
- Iran's threat remains hypothetical due to its own reliance on Hormuz for **exporting oil to China**, its primary buyer.

## 5. Energy Security: Definition and India's Approach

- **Energy Security** refers to the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price.
- India has built **strategic petroleum reserves (SPR)**, diversified its **import sources**, and engaged in **long-term contracts and emergency protocols** with key suppliers like **UAE, Saudi Arabia, and USA**.
- India's long-term aim is to **reduce import dependence** through renewable expansion and domestic exploration.

## Conclusion

India's proactive plan to counter disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz reflects a **mature strategic response** to energy vulnerability. By leveraging **regional diplomacy**, **alternative logistics**, and **global partnerships**, India strengthens its **energy resilience** amid geopolitical uncertainties. For UPSC aspirants, this is a model case of **strategic foresight in foreign policy**, **energy governance**, and **crisis management**, showcasing the link between **geopolitics and economic security**.

## 7. India's Strategic Push for Chabahar Port

### 1. Chabahar Port: A Strategic Alternative to Bandar Abbas

- **Chabahar Port**, located in southeastern Iran, is being developed by India as its **primary port of call** for trade with **Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asian republics**, replacing reliance on Iran's **Bandar Abbas port** which is close to the **volatile Strait of Hormuz**.
- The decision gains urgency amid **West Asian tensions**, particularly the **Israel-Iran conflict** and instability near **Hormuz**, a critical chokepoint for global oil shipments.

### 2. Connectivity Infrastructure and INSTC Integration

- India and Iran are **fast-tracking a rail link** between **Chabahar and Zahedan**, a key link in the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**.
- Once complete (expected by **2026-end or early 2027**), Chabahar will act as a **gateway for Eurasian trade**, connecting Indian shipments to **Central Asia, Russia, and Europe** through a multimodal transport network.

### 3. Strategic and Geopolitical Importance

- Chabahar offers India a route that **bypasses Pakistan** and the **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)**, thereby enhancing India's **regional influence** and **strategic autonomy**.



- It supports India's **"Connect Central Asia" Policy** and the broader objective of improving **Eurasian trade** routes free from geopolitical chokepoints.

#### 4. Constitutional and Legal Dimensions

- The project aligns with **Article 51(c)** of the Indian Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy), promoting **international peace and friendly relations**.
- It also serves the **national interest** by enhancing energy and trade security, falling under the purview of **Article 73**, which gives the Union executive power in matters of external affairs and international trade.

#### 5. Operational Progress and Volume Growth

- According to the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), Chabahar handled **80,000 TEU** and **3 million tonnes** of dry bulk cargo in **FY25**, showing growing viability.
- Port operations were **uninterrupted** during regional conflicts, demonstrating its **resilience** and **strategic reliability** compared to other ports in the Persian Gulf.

#### Definition Box – Key Terms

- **Strait of Hormuz:** A narrow maritime passage between Iran and Oman, a key oil shipping lane.
- **TEU (Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit):** A standard measure of containerized cargo capacity.
- **INSTC (International North–South Transport Corridor):** A multi-modal trade route linking India with Central Asia and Europe via Iran and Russia.
- **CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor):** A key part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), linking China with Gwadar Port in Pakistan.



#### Conclusion

India's strategic focus on Chabahar port represents a **critical move in regional geopolitics**, ensuring **unhindered trade access, bypassing Pakistan, and reducing exposure to Hormuz-linked disruptions**. As tensions persist in West Asia, Chabahar is emerging as a **linchpin of India's foreign trade strategy**—a testament to India's **forward-looking diplomacy, infrastructure diplomacy, and Act West Policy**. This development is highly relevant for UPSC aspirants studying **international relations, geography, and strategic infrastructure**.



## 8. NITI Aayog's Push to Improve Data Quality in India

### 1. NITI Aayog's Report on Data Quality: A Strategic Imperative

- NITI Aayog has recommended **institutional reforms** to enhance the **quality, ownership, and interoperability** of data across sectors.
- The report emphasizes that **reliable, consistent, and timely data** is critical for **evidence-based policymaking**, performance monitoring, and service delivery.

### 2. Key Recommendations of the Report

- **Institutionalization of Data Ownership:** Clearly defining who is responsible for collecting, maintaining, and updating specific datasets to improve **accountability**.
- **Incentivizing High-Quality Data Generation:** Introducing **performance-based incentives** for government departments and data custodians that ensure accuracy, completeness, and timeliness.
- **Ensuring Interoperability:** Promoting **machine-readable formats** and **cross-platform compatibility** so that data can be efficiently used across departments, ministries, and states.

### 3. Constitutional & Legal Provisions Related to Data Governance



- **Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005:** Emphasizes **transparency** and **public access to data**, making high-quality data crucial for accountability.
  - **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP Act):** Sets out **rights of individuals** regarding their personal data and **obligations of data fiduciaries**, ensuring **data privacy and protection**.
  - **Article 19(1)(a):** Right to freedom of speech and expression includes the **right to receive information**.
  - **Article 73 & 246:** Allow the Union Government to legislate and manage central-level data systems in concurrent and union list matters.
- ### 4. Why This Matters for Governance and Development
- **Low-quality or fragmented data** leads to flawed policy targeting (e.g., errors in beneficiary databases, health records, or census figures).
  - Improved data can aid in **targeted welfare schemes, climate action, health interventions, education outcomes, and localised development**.
  - Supports **Digital India, Aspirational Districts Programme, and National Data and Analytics Platform (NDAP)**.





## 5. Definitions and Important Concepts

- **Data Interoperability:** The ability of different systems to access, exchange, and use data in a coordinated manner.
- **Data Custodian:** The agency or department responsible for managing and maintaining specific datasets.
- **Metadata Standards:** Standardized formats and terminologies used to describe, tag, and structure data to enhance consistency and usability.

## Conclusion

NITI Aayog's initiative underscores the need to **transform India's data ecosystem** into one that is **high-quality, accountable, and interoperable**. With the increasing role of data in public service delivery and digital governance, implementing these reforms is vital to making India a **data-intelligent state**.

## 9. DGCA Uncovers Major Safety Lapses in Indian Aviation Sector

### 1. Nationwide Safety Audit Triggered by Air India Crash

- Following the **Air India plane crash on 12 June 2025**, the **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** conducted a **special safety audit** across major Indian airports including Delhi and Mumbai.
- The audit aimed to identify safety violations and systemic deficiencies in **flight operations, airworthiness, ground support, air traffic control (ATC), and maintenance practices**.

### 2. Key Findings of the Audit

- **Recurring technical defects** in certain aircraft due to **poor rectification practices**, suggesting **ineffective maintenance and oversight**.
- **Unserviceable ground handling equipment** such as baggage trolleys and loaders at several airports.
- Non-compliance with **aircraft maintenance manuals**, with critical **snags unrecorded** in technical logbooks.
- **Safety gear lapses:** unsecured life vests and damaged corrosion-resistant tape on aircraft wings.
- **Infrastructure issues:** Faded **runway markings**, **non-functional taxiway lights**, and outdated **obstacle limitation data** (vital for determining maximum height of nearby constructions).

### 3. Maintenance and Training Deficiencies

- A **flight simulator** was found to be mismatched with actual aircraft configuration.
- Tyres of an aircraft were found **worn-out**, delaying a domestic flight until rectification.
- The DGCA noted **non-adherence to standard work orders** during aircraft maintenance by airline personnel.



#### 4. Legal and Institutional Framework

- **DGCA**, under the **Ministry of Civil Aviation**, is the regulatory body empowered by **Aircraft Act, 1934** and **Aircraft Rules, 1937**, responsible for safety oversight.
- **Annex 19 of the ICAO Convention** mandates states to maintain a safety management system (SMS).
- **Civil Aviation Requirements (CARs)** under DGCA establish procedures and safety protocols binding on operators, engineers, and airports.
- DGCA has invoked **special surveillance provisions** post-crash, requiring rectification within **7 days** and continuous inspections in the future.

#### 5. Key Definitions for UPSC

- **Airworthiness**: The condition of an aircraft to be safe for flight, as certified by regulatory authorities.
- **Obstacle Limitation Surface (OLS)**: A conceptual surface defining the limits to which objects may project into the airspace around an airport.
- **Ramp Safety**: Measures to prevent accidents and incidents during ground handling of aircraft and passengers.
- **Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (AME)**: A licensed professional authorized to perform and certify aircraft maintenance.

#### Conclusion

The DGCA's surveillance highlights **critical gaps in India's aviation safety ecosystem**, which can jeopardize public safety and tarnish international credibility. With India emerging as a major aviation hub, ensuring **strict regulatory compliance, real-time monitoring, and infrastructure modernization** is crucial.

## 10. West Asia Reset & Global Implications

### 1. Strategic Realignment in West Asia Post Israel-U.S. Strike on Iran

- **Israel and the U.S. jointly bombed Iran's nuclear facilities**, with silent or implicit approval from most regional and global powers — including **Russia, China, and Gulf nations**, despite their strategic agreements with Iran.
- This action **dismantled much of Iran's regional military depth**, reducing its influence over proxy groups in **Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza**, and **repositioned Israel as the sole dominant nuclear power** in the region.

### 2. Iran's Retaliation and the Risk of Escalation

- Iran launched **retaliatory missile strikes on U.S. military bases in Qatar and Iraq**, citing a proportional response to the attacks on its nuclear facilities.



- This **violated the territorial integrity** of regional allies (e.g., Qatar), highlighting how **proxy wars and foreign troop presence increase regional instability**.
- Iran's actions signal that the **conflict is existential** and part of a broader **struggle against regime change** efforts by the U.S. and Israel.

### 3. Ceasefire and New Diplomatic Window

- A **U.S.-brokered ceasefire** offers Iran an exit strategy without appearing weak; this may facilitate renewed talks on the **Iran Nuclear Deal (JCPOA)**.



- There is a **possibility of reviving nuclear diplomacy**, with Gulf nations being encouraged to play a **stabilizing and supportive role** in this process.
- **Iran's threats to exit the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty)** or block the **Strait of Hormuz** could intensify if de-escalation fails.

### 4. The Next Crisis: Annexation of Palestinian Territories

- With Iranian resistance weakened, **Israel is poised to annex Gaza and the West Bank**, fulfilling PM Netanyahu's vision of **"Eretz Israel"** — the Greater Israel stretching from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.
- This will likely result in **Palestinians becoming second-class citizens** or stateless, raising serious concerns about **apartheid, international law violations, and regional backlash**.
- The **Abraham Accords** and normalization efforts by Gulf countries have **muted Arab pressure** on Israel for a two-state solution.

### 5. India's Position: Strategic Silence with Balanced Diplomacy

- India has **maintained neutrality**, avoiding direct comment on Israeli strikes or Iran's retaliation, while **quietly advocating "de-escalation"**.
- India has **deep interests on both sides** — strategic and defence cooperation with Israel and infrastructure and energy partnerships with Iran (e.g., **Chabahar Port**).
- This approach reflects India's **pragmatic foreign policy doctrine** focused on **energy security, diaspora protection, and geopolitical balance**.

### 6. Relevant Constitutional and Legal Provisions (for UPSC)

- **Article 51(c) of the Indian Constitution** urges the State to promote respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **UN Charter Articles 2(4) and 51** deal with the prohibition of force and the right to self-defence respectively — both invoked in the Israel-Iran conflict.
- **NPT (1968)** and **JCPOA (2015)** are key international legal frameworks affected by the escalation.

### Definitions for UPSC



- **De-escalation:** The process of reducing the intensity of a conflict or crisis between two or more parties.
- **Proxy War:** A conflict where two opposing powers use third parties as substitutes for fighting each other directly.
- **Apartheid State:** A regime that enforces institutionalized racial or ethnic segregation and discrimination.

## Conclusion

The recent Israeli-U.S. strike on Iran marks a **new chapter in West Asian geopolitics**, reshaping power equations and potentially triggering long-term instability. While Iran's nuclear program is likely delayed, **Israel's unchecked dominance** and potential **annexation of Palestinian territories** may spark the next regional crisis. For India, **strategic neutrality and regional stability** are paramount given its **energy dependence, diaspora, and infrastructure investments** in the region.

## 11. Gender Equity in Urban Bureaucracy: A Critical Need for Inclusive Urban India

### 1. Urban Transformation and Gender Equity Mandate

- India is undergoing a **massive urban transformation**—by 2050, **over 800 million** people will live in cities.
- The **74th Constitutional Amendment Act (1992)** mandates **33% reservation for women in Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)**; 17 States and 1 UT have extended this to **50%**.
- Despite the rising number of **women mayors and councillors (46%)**, the **urban bureaucratic and technical workforce** (planners, engineers, police) remains **largely male-dominated**.



### 2. Persistent Gender Gap in Urban Administration

- **Women comprise only 20% of the IAS** and a much **lower percentage in municipal engineering, planning, and policing** (11.7% women in police forces; mostly in desk jobs).
- Gender imbalance **limits responsiveness to women's needs** in cities — like **safe transport, public lighting, and localized infrastructure** for caregiving.
- Studies show **women administrators prioritize health, water, and safety**, and improve **trust and empathy** in governance outcomes.

### 3. Gender Budgeting: Missed Potential in Urban Governance

- **Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB)** — integrating gender equity in public finances — was **adopted in India in 2005–06**, but implementation is **weak and tokenistic**, especially in small towns.



- While **Delhi, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala** have made notable progress, most ULBs **lack institutional capacity**, monitoring, and integration of GRB into core planning.
- In contrast, countries like **Philippines, South Africa, Rwanda, and Mexico** have embedded **GRB through laws, mandates, and participatory planning**.

#### 4. Global Best Practices and Lessons for India

- **Rwanda:** Allocated GRB funds for maternal health and education.
- **South Korea:** Used gender audits to reform transport and safety policies.
- **Mexico & Uganda:** Link gender budgeting to **results-based planning and certification**.
- **Philippines:** Allocates **5% of local budgets for gender programmes**, including shelters and child care.
- These models reflect that **gender-inclusive bureaucracies improve service delivery, safety, and public trust**.

#### 5. Constitutional and Policy Frameworks for Gender Equity

- **Article 15(3)** of the Indian Constitution allows the State to make **special provisions for women**.
- **Articles 243D & 243T** under the 73rd and 74th Amendments provide **reservation in PRIs and ULBs**, respectively.
- India's National Policy for Women (2016 draft) calls for **gender mainstreaming** in urban planning and governance, but lacks formal implementation.

#### Key Definitions for UPSC

- **Urban Bureaucracy:** Administrative and technical machinery (officials, engineers, planners) that governs urban areas.
- **Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB):** A budgeting approach that ensures public spending is equitable and benefits women and men equally.
- **Glass Ceiling:** Invisible barriers that prevent women from rising beyond a certain level in professional hierarchies.

#### Conclusion: Towards Gender-Inclusive Urban Futures

India's journey to becoming a \$5 trillion economy must be accompanied by a **parallel transformation in urban governance** — one that **centres gender equity not just in politics, but in bureaucracy**. Equal representation must be institutionalized in administrative, planning, and enforcement roles. **Mandatory gender audits, affirmative action, capacity building, and a robust GRB framework** can ensure that urban development is **inclusive, responsive, and just**. For cities to work for women, they must be built **with** women — not merely for them.





## 12. Inter-State Water Dispute: The Polavaram–Banakacherla Link Project and Godavari Waters

### 1. Context: The Godavari–Krishna Water Sharing Dispute

- A new **inter-state conflict** has emerged between **Andhra Pradesh and Telangana** over the proposed **Polavaram–Banakacherla Link Project**.
- The project intends to **divert 200 TMC ft of Godavari water** to the **Krishna and Penna basins**, with the goal of supplying drinking and irrigation water to drought-prone **Rayalaseema**.
- The **Central Water Commission (CWC)** has sought a **Detailed Project Report (DPR)** after Andhra Pradesh submitted a pre-feasibility report.

### 2. Centre's Involvement and Funding Offer

- The **Central Government has offered 50% funding** (~₹40,000 crore) for the project under the **Interlinking of Rivers (ILR)** initiative.
- The rest of the amount will be borrowed **beyond the FRBM (Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management) limits** — creating resentment in **Telangana**, which had its own borrowing limits reduced due to off-budget loans for the **Kaleshwaram project**.

### 3. Telangana's Objections: Riparian Rights and Political Undercurrents

- Telangana claims the project **violates its riparian rights** under the **Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014**, and lacks proper inter-state consultation.
- Both the ruling **Congress** and the opposition **BRS** in Telangana blame each other for allowing Andhra Pradesh to move forward with the project.
- BRS alleges that **political favoritism** by the Centre (due to its alliance with TDP in AP) enabled rapid clearances.

### 4. Concerns of Future Water Re-Allocation and Tribunal Interventions

- Telangana fears that **diverting water now may establish Andhra Pradesh's future claim** over Godavari waters during reallocation by the **Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal**.
- Past instances like **Pothireddypadu expansion** (Krishna diversion to Penna) are cited as examples of Andhra's encroachment into non-basin areas.

### 5. Key Constitutional & Legal Provisions Relevant to the Issue

- **Article 262**: Parliament can adjudicate inter-state river disputes. It also allows for the establishment of tribunals (e.g., **Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal**).





- **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956:** Governs the resolution of disputes over water sharing between states.
- **Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014:** Ensures equitable distribution of water post bifurcation between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- **FRBM Act, 2003:** Limits state borrowings unless allowed by the Centre.

## 6. Expert Suggestions and Regional Sentiment

- Experts urge that any appraisal of the Polavaram–Banakacherla project must be **preceded by clearances to Telangana's ongoing Godavari basin projects**.
- Telangana also demands **additional water allocation in the Krishna basin** to balance the inter-basin transfer from Godavari.
- Water issues evoke **strong regional sentiments** due to their links with **agriculture, drinking water, and state identity**.

## Key Definitions

- **Riparian Rights:** The rights of states or parties located along a river to access and use water reasonably and equitably.
- **Interlinking of Rivers (ILR):** A national project aimed at transferring surplus water from water-rich to water-scarce basins via canal networks.
- **TMC ft (Thousand Million Cubic Feet):** A unit of volume used to measure water, commonly used in India for river water allocation.

## Conclusion: Need for Neutral and Transparent Water Governance

Inter-state water disputes, such as the one over the **Polavaram–Banakacherla Link Project**, require the **Centre to act as a neutral facilitator** upholding constitutional values and equitable access. A **transparent and consultative approach**, respecting existing water rights and legal provisions, is essential to prevent future conflicts and maintain federal harmony. The **Union Government must ensure impartial adjudication** and strengthen mechanisms like **tribunals, joint river boards, and water-sharing agreements** for cooperative federalism in water governance.