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

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

**DATE: 23/05/2025 ( FRIDAY )**



 **9972258970 & 9740702455**

**#317/A SKB Arcade, D. Subbaiah Road,  
Ramaswamy Circle, Mysuru-570004**



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## 1. “CemHack for Green Infra” Hackathon – Key Highlights

- **Objective and Organizers:**

The “CemHack for Green Infra” is a national-level hackathon launched by the *NCB Incubation Centre (NCB-IC)* under the *Ministry of Commerce and Industry (DPIIT)*. It aims to promote innovation, green technologies, and entrepreneurship in the *cement and construction sectors* to help achieve sustainability and Net Zero targets.

- **Thematic Focus and Structure:**

The hackathon focuses on themes such as *Green Cement, Green Process, Green Concrete, Carbon Capture & Storage (CCU), Logistics & Supply Chain*, and sustainability strategies. It includes *two tracks*—one for startups and professionals, and another for students and academia.

- **Incentives and Support Mechanism:**

Participants can win *cash rewards up to ₹1 lakh* and receive *incubation and mentorship support* at NCB-IC. The participation is free, and the registration window is open from *20th May to 20th July 2025*.

- **Institutional and Industry Collaboration:**

The event marks the first anniversary of NCB-IC and fosters collaboration among *IITs, NITs, industry leaders, and academic institutions*.

NCB’s recent milestone includes a *DST-funded CCU test bed* in collaboration with *IIT Roorkee and JK Cement Ltd.*



- **Policy and Constitutional Relevance:**

- Supports *Article 48A* of the Constitution – Protection and improvement of environment.
- Aligns with *India’s commitments under the Paris Agreement* and the *Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)*.
- Promotes *Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 9* (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) and *SDG 13* (Climate Action).
- Encourages *public-private partnerships (PPP)* and innovation ecosystems under *Startup India* and *Atal Innovation Mission* frameworks.

- **Future Outlook and Institutional Expansion:**

A *Centre of Excellence for Carbon Capture and Utilization (CCU)* is to be established at NCB, reflecting the government’s strategic focus on *green infrastructure and low-carbon technologies* in the cement industry.



This initiative is significant in the context of India's climate commitments, circular economy goals, and fostering indigenous innovation—relevant for UPSC topics under *GS Paper 3* (Environment, Industry, and Infrastructure).

## 2. Inauguration of “Sagar Bhavan” and “Polar Bhavan” – Key Highlights

- **Strategic Infrastructure for Polar and Ocean Research:**

Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh inaugurated *Sagar Bhavan* and *Polar Bhavan* at Goa's *National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCPOR)*, marking a major milestone in India's integrated approach to *polar and ocean sciences*. These are *first-of-their-kind facilities in India*, designed to support advanced research, weather forecasting, and climate studies.

- **Boost to Ocean Geopolitics and Blue Economy Vision:**

The initiative aligns with the *PM's vision of the Blue Economy* and aims to enhance India's role in *ocean geopolitics*. It underscores India's aspiration for a leadership role in marine science diplomacy and supports the national goal of “*Viksit Bharat by 2047*”.

- **Key Features and Facilities:**

- *Polar Bhavan* (₹55 crore, 11,378 sq. m): Hosts polar research labs, accommodation for scientists, conference facilities, and the upcoming *Polar and Ocean Museum*.
- *Sagar Bhavan* (₹13 crore, 1,772 sq. m): Equipped with *-30°C labs*, sediment archives, and *Class 1000 clean rooms* for advanced trace metal/isotope analysis.
- Launched *Science On Sphere (SOS)*, a 3D visualization platform for climate and earth system data.



- **Constitutional and Legal Provisions:**

- *Indian Antarctic Act, 2022*: Provides a legal framework for India's activities in Antarctica, aligning with *international treaties* and environmental norms.
- *India's Arctic Policy, 2022*: Guides India's strategic and scientific engagement in the Arctic.
- Supports *Article 51(c)* of the Constitution (promotion of international peace and cooperation) and *Article 48A* (protection and improvement of environment).





- **Relevance to Climate Change and Coastal Vulnerability:**

Dr. Singh emphasized the *urgency of monitoring polar ice melt* due to its potential to *raise global sea levels*, threatening India's 7,500 km long coastline and coastal population. The initiative enhances India's capacity to respond to *climate-induced socio-economic and environmental risks*.

- **Global Significance and International Collaboration:**

NCPOR now ranks among elite global institutions with *comprehensive polar-ocean research capabilities*. It supports India's scientific presence in Antarctica (*Maitri and Bharati stations*), Arctic (*Himadri station*), Himalayas (*Himansh*), and leads the *Deep Ocean Mission*, facilitating *international cooperation* in transboundary climate research.

**Relevance for UPSC:**

This development touches upon *GS Paper 1 (Climate Change)*, *GS Paper 2 (International Relations – Ocean Geopolitics)*, *GS Paper 3 (Environment, Science & Tech, Disaster Management)*, and *GS Paper 4 (Environmental Ethics and Sustainable Development)*.

**3. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) Announces Winning Ideas under 'Ideas4LiFE' Initiative – Key Highlights**

- **Purpose and Vision of the Initiative:**

The '*Ideas4LiFE*' initiative, launched under the broader umbrella of *Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment)*, seeks to promote innovative, citizen-centric ideas that support *sustainable and environmentally responsible lifestyles*. It embodies PM Modi's vision of *mindful consumption and resource efficiency* to address climate change and ecological degradation.

- **Selection Process and Participation:**

Out of *1384 entries*, *21 winning ideas* were selected (top 3 ideas from each of the 7 themes of Mission LiFE). The rigorous *three-phase evaluation process* assessed originality, feasibility, impact, innovation, and scalability, involving the Department of Higher Education and a national-level jury.





- **Seven Themes of Mission LiFE:**

The initiative focused on solutions across seven lifestyle-based environmental themes:

1. **Save Energy**
2. **Save Water**
3. **Say No to Single-Use Plastic**
4. **Adopt Sustainable Food Systems**
5. **Reduce Waste**
6. **Reduce E-waste**
7. **Adopt Healthy Lifestyles**

These reflect an integrated approach to addressing both *consumption patterns* and *climate resilience*.

- **Institutional Collaboration and Digital Outreach:**

The initiative was implemented via a dedicated portal (<https://ideas4life.in>) in partnership with *UNICEF YuWaah*, targeting *students, faculty, and research institutions* to mainstream sustainability in public thought and youth engagement.

- **Legal and Constitutional Framework:**

- Aligned with *Article 48A* (State's duty to protect the environment) and *Article 51A(g)* (Fundamental Duty of citizens to protect the environment).
- Supports *SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)*, *SDG 13 (Climate Action)*, and *India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)*.
- Reinforces India's *Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)* under the *Paris Agreement* through behavior-driven climate action.

- **Relevance and Implications:**

This initiative reflects the shift towards *people-led climate action*, empowering citizens as *Pro-Planet People (P3)*. It is part of India's *LiFE movement*, which positions lifestyle change as a key climate strategy globally. The initiative also boosts innovation for *green technologies, circular economy, and community-level climate resilience*.

**Relevance for UPSC:**

Highly relevant for *GS Paper 3 (Environment, Climate Change, Sustainable Development)*, *GS Paper 2 (Governance and Citizen Engagement)*, and *GS Paper 4 (Ethics – Environmental and Social Responsibility)*.



#### 4. MoEFCC Celebrates International Day for Biological Diversity 2025

- **Theme and Objective of the Celebration:**

The International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) 2025 was celebrated with the theme '*Harmony with Nature and Sustainable Development*'. Organized by MoEFCC in Udaipur, Rajasthan, in collaboration with the National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) and State agencies, the event aimed to promote *people-led biodiversity conservation* and *public awareness on sustainable use of bioresources*.

- **Key National-Level Initiatives and Campaigns:**

- Inauguration of a *Biodiversity and Bioresources Exhibition* featuring indigenous products, medicinal plants, and conservation practices.
- Launch of a *fortnight-long campaign* on '*Ending Plastic Pollution*' in the run-up to World Environment Day 2025.
- H



t  
he '*Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam*' campaign, which has led to 142 crore plantations, promoting mass public participation in conservation.

- **India's Global Biodiversity Commitments:**

- India showcased leadership at *CBD COP-16 (2024)* in Cali, Colombia, through the submission of:
  - **Updated National Biodiversity Targets (2024).**
  - **Revised National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP 2024-2030).**
- India actively advocates for bridging the *global biodiversity finance gap* and reforming access and benefit-sharing frameworks under the CBD.



- **Legal and Policy Framework:**

- Celebration aligns with the *Biological Diversity Act, 2002*, which mandates conservation, sustainable use, and fair benefit-sharing of biological resources.
- Release of key policy documents:
  - *Seventh National Report (NR7)* to the CBD.
  - *Compendium on Biodiversity Heritage Sites* (49 sites notified).
  - *Fair and Equitable Sharing Regulations, 2025*.
  - *Business & Biodiversity Certificate Programme Prospectus* by MoEFCC, IICA, NBA & UNDP.

- **Constitutional Provisions and Ethical Foundations:**

- Anchored in *Article 48A* (protection and improvement of the environment) and *Article 51A(g)* (duty of citizens to protect natural environment).
- Promotes the Indian ecological philosophy of '*Prakriti Rakshati Rakshita*' and '*VasudhaivaKutumbakam*', emphasizing harmony with nature and global environmental solidarity.

- **Significance for UPSC:**

This event highlights India's strong commitment to *sustainable development*, *biodiversity conservation*, and *global environmental diplomacy*. It is relevant for:

- *GS Paper 3* (Environment, Biodiversity, Climate Change).
- *GS Paper 2* (Governance, International Relations - CBD).
- *Ethics* (GS Paper 4 – Environmental ethics, intergenerational equity).

## 5. MoEFCC Launches 'One Nation, One Mission: End Plastic Pollution' Campaign for WED 2025

- **Nationwide Campaign for World Environment Day (WED) 2025:**

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) launched a mass mobilisation campaign titled '**One Nation, One Mission: End Plastic**

**Pollution'**, ahead of **World Environment Day 2025 (5th June)**. The campaign aligns with **Mission LiFE** (Lifestyle for Environment), a flagship initiative of India that promotes sustainable living and behaviour change.

- **Focus on Single-Use Plastic and Sustainable Alternatives:**







The central theme of the campaign is ‘**Say No to Single Use Plastic**’, focusing on:

- Reducing plastic use and generation.
- Promoting segregation, collection, disposal, and recycling of plastic waste.
- Encouraging innovation in **eco-friendly alternatives** to plastic products.
- Building awareness about the health and ecological hazards of plastic pollution.

- **Multi-Stakeholder Participation and Activities:**

The campaign promotes **decentralised participation** involving Central Ministries, States/UTs, educational institutions, industry, civil society, RWAs, and municipal bodies. Key activities include:

- Awareness campaigns (nukkadnataks, pledges, marathons).
- Clean-up drives (beaches, parks, railway stations).
- Workshops and educational activities (hackathons, quizzes, exhibitions).
- Localised waste management initiatives and community mobilisation.

- **Use of Digital Platforms for Monitoring and Engagement:**

All campaign-related activities are to be uploaded on the ‘**Meri LiFE**’ portal, allowing the government to monitor progress and encourage mass participation. This creates a **people-powered movement** towards responsible consumption and waste management.

- **Legal and Constitutional Backing:**

- Backed by the **Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016** (amended in 2022), which ban specific single-use plastic items.
- Upholds **Article 48A** (State’s duty to protect the environment) and **Article 51A(g)** (citizen's duty to safeguard nature).
- Reflects India’s commitment under **SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production)** and **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**.

- **Relevance for UPSC Exam:**

This campaign is significant for:

- *GS Paper 3*: Environmental pollution and waste management, plastic pollution.
- *GS Paper 2*: Governance and stakeholder engagement.
- *Ethics Paper (GS 4)*: Environmental ethics and citizen responsibility.
- *Essay Paper*: Themes on sustainability, behavioural change, and climate responsibility.





## 6. BPR&D Launches National Hackathon on CCTV Solutions for Law Enforcement

- **Objective and Organisers of the Hackathon:**

The **Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)**, under the **Ministry of Home Affairs**, in collaboration with **NCRB** and **CyberPeace Foundation**, has launched a **National Hackathon on CCTV Solutions**. The initiative aims to encourage **start-ups, researchers, and innovators** to develop **indigenous, secure, scalable, and cost-effective CCTV solutions** for Indian law enforcement agencies (LEAs).

- **Focus Areas and Innovation Goals:**

The Hackathon includes **four problem statements** focusing on:

- Secure and indigenous CCTV hardware/systems.
- Integration of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **smart video analytics**.
- Strengthening **cybersecurity** in CCTV networks.
- Developing **affordable and efficient surveillance solutions**.

This aligns with India's vision of building **self-reliant and cyber-resilient** surveillance systems tailored for domestic law enforcement needs.

- **National Security and Cyber Resilience:**

Under the leadership of **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** and **Union Home Minister Amit Shah**, the initiative reflects the government's focus on creating a “**Cyber-Secure Bharat**”. BPR&D, with its technical expertise, plays a vital role in enhancing **internal security infrastructure**, supporting both **national security and public safety**.

- **Encouraging Innovation and Indigenous Technology:**

The Hackathon is a step toward achieving **Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Reliant India)** in surveillance and public safety technology. It promotes **indigenous R&D** in line with the **Make in India** initiative and aligns with **Digital India** by fostering innovation in law enforcement technologies.

- **Grand Finale and Awards:**

The **final round** of the Hackathon is scheduled for the **last week of June 2025**. Cash prizes:

- **1st Prize:** ₹5 Lakh,
- **2nd Prize:** ₹3 Lakh,
- **3rd Prize:** ₹1 Lakh,
- Five **consolation prizes** for outstanding entries.

Winning solutions are expected to enhance **transparency, accountability, and operational efficiency** in policing.



- **Legal and Constitutional Context:**

- **Article 21:** Right to life includes the right to safety, which surveillance and public security initiatives aim to protect.
- **Data Protection and Privacy Concerns:** Solutions must align with **constitutional safeguards of privacy (K.S. Puttaswamy Judgment, 2017)** and the proposed **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023**.
- Promotes **Rule of Law** and modernization of policing under **Police Act reforms and smart policing initiatives**.

**Relevance for UPSC:**

- *GS Paper 2:* Governance, transparency, and accountability; internal security; role of technology in governance.
- *GS Paper 3:* Cybersecurity, ICT in internal security; technological innovations for national security.
- *Essay & Ethics Papers:* Role of ethical AI, innovation, and public accountability in modern governance.

**7. 4% Reservation in Central Government Housing for Persons with Disabilities – Key Points**

- **Landmark Inclusive Governance Reform:**

The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**, led by **Union Minister Shri Manohar Lal**, has announced **4% reservation in Central Government housing for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs)**. This step reinforces the principle of **inclusive development** under the broader vision of *Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas* and aligns with the **Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan** (Accessible India Campaign).

- **Legal and Constitutional Backing:**

- The move is in **compliance with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016**, which mandates **non-discrimination and equal opportunity** in access to government facilities.





- Constitutionally, it supports **Article 14** (Right to Equality), **Article 15(1)** (Prohibition of discrimination), and **Article 21** (Right to dignity and life).
- **Implementation Framework:**  
The **Directorate of Estates** has issued an **Office Memorandum** operationalizing this policy, ensuring PwDs are entitled to 4% reservation in allotments of **residential accommodation** under central government housing schemes.
- **Enhancing Accessibility and Dignity:**  
The reform seeks to address **systemic exclusion** of PwDs in public infrastructure and services by integrating them into **mainstream housing facilities**, ensuring **accessibility, dignity, and security**.
- **Alignment with International Commitments:**  
This step also aligns with India's obligations under the **UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**, to which India is a signatory, aiming for full participation and inclusion of PwDs in all aspects of life.
- **Relevance for UPSC Civil Services Exam:**
  - *GS Paper 2*: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections, Rights issues, Government policies and interventions.
  - *GS Paper 1 (Society)*: Social empowerment, inclusion and equitable development.
  - *Ethics Paper*: Compassion, empathy, and governance based on moral obligation toward disadvantaged groups.

This measure is a concrete step toward building an **inclusive governance framework** where **infrastructure is accessible to all**, thereby operationalizing the constitutional and legal vision of **equity and social justice**.

#### 8. ASI Asks Archaeologist to Revise Keezhadi Excavation Report – Key Points

- **Background of Keezhadi Excavations:**  
Keezhadi, a significant archaeological site near **Madurai, Tamil Nadu**, is believed to represent an **urban settlement of the Sangam Age**, with findings dated back to **200 BCE**. Archaeologist **Amarnath Ramakrishna** led the excavation and used **Accelerator Mass Spectrometry (AMS)** for dating artefacts.
- **ASI's Directive for Report Revision:**  
The **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** has asked Ramakrishna to **resubmit his 982-page excavation report** after suggested corrections by two experts. ASI





cited the need for improved **authenticity**, proper **period classification**, and scientifically justified **chronological timelines**, particularly for **Period I (8th to 5th century BCE)**.

- **Scientific and Academic Concerns:**

The ASI emphasized the need for **stratigraphical consistency**, scientific **AMS dating**, and accurate period nomenclature. The earliest cultural phase, claimed as **pre-300 BCE**, is under scrutiny for lack of concrete justification based on current data.

- **Controversy and Criticism:**

Former IAS officer and author **R. Balakrishnan** criticized the ASI's directive as **"unprecedented"** and politically influenced, arguing that **delaying or suppressing excavation reports undermines academic freedom** and public knowledge of India's early civilizations.

- **Legal and Constitutional Relevance:**

- Under the **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958**, the ASI is the custodian of national heritage and is empowered to oversee archaeological research.
- **Article 49** of the Constitution directs the State to protect monuments and places of historic interest.
- **Article 51A(f)** outlines the **Fundamental Duty** to value and preserve the rich heritage of the country's composite culture.

- **Relevance for UPSC Civil Services Exam:**

- *GS Paper 1 (Culture & History)*: Ancient urban settlements, Sangam Age, Archaeological methods.
- *GS Paper 2*: Institutional autonomy, transparency in public institutions.
- *GS Paper 4 (Ethics)*: Integrity in public service, academic freedom vs bureaucratic control.

This issue underscores the **tension between archaeological autonomy and institutional oversight**, and raises important questions on how India narrates and preserves its **civilizational legacy**.

## 9. CoBRA Commando and Top Maoist Killed in Sukma Operation – Key Points

- **Major Anti-Naxal Operation in Chhattisgarh:**

A **CoBRA commando** and a **Maoist** were killed in a prolonged gunfight during an **anti-**







**Naxal operation in Sukma district**, with two other CoBRA personnel injured. The encounter followed a major strike a day earlier in **Narayanpur**, where **27 Maoists** including **CPI(Maoist) general secretary Basavaraju (Nambala Keshav Rao)** were neutralised.

- **Significance of Basavaraju's Neutralisation:**

**Basavaraju**, the **topmost Maoist leader**, carried a reward of **₹3.25 crore**, and was one of the most wanted figures in India's Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) landscape. His killing marks a **historic breakthrough**, as it is the **first time in 30 years** that the general secretary of CPI(Maoist) has been eliminated.

- **Strategic Implications for Internal Security:**

According to the Chhattisgarh CM, **Naxalite activity has now been restricted to a few pockets** in the state. This marks a **critical milestone** in India's ongoing counter-insurgency campaign in the **Red Corridor**, significantly **weakening the top leadership structure** of Maoists.

- **Security Forces Involved:**

The operation involved a coordinated effort by the **Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA)** of the CRPF, **District Reserve Guard (DRG)**, and **Special Task Force (STF)**. These units are specially trained for jungle warfare and anti-Naxal operations, exemplifying the **multi-agency approach** in countering LWE.

- **Legal and Constitutional Framework:**

- Article **355** of the Constitution obligates the Union to protect states against internal disturbances like insurgency.
- The **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA)** allows for banning extremist groups such as CPI(Maoist).
- Under the **National Policy and Action Plan (2015)** to combat LWE, focus is on both **security and development** in affected regions.

- **Relevance for UPSC Civil Services Exam:**

- *GS Paper 3*: Internal security, insurgency, role of security forces, LWE.
- *GS Paper 2*: Centre-State relations in managing internal disturbances, cooperative federalism.
- *Ethics Paper (GS 4)*: Bravery and sacrifice of armed personnel, conflict resolution.

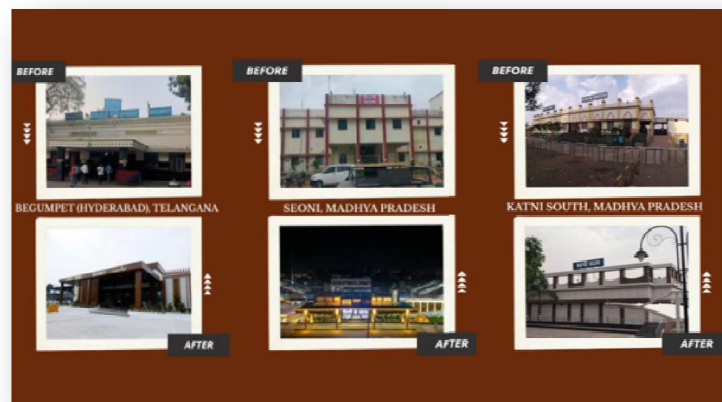
This development marks a potential turning point in **India's long-standing fight against Maoist insurgency**, and underscores the importance of **intelligence-based operations**, **multi-force coordination**, and **socio-political strategy** to tackle internal security challenges.





## 10. PM Inaugurates 103 Amrit Bharat Railway Stations – Key Points

- **Massive Infrastructure Push through Amrit Bharat Station Scheme (ABSS):**  
Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated **103 Amrit Bharat** railway stations across **86 districts in 18 States/UTs** at a cost of over **₹1,100 crore**. These stations are part of the **Amrit Bharat Station Scheme**, aimed at transforming over **1,300 stations** for improved passenger experience and infrastructure.
- **Fusion of Modernisation with Heritage Preservation:**  
The upgraded stations showcase **local heritage, culture, and architecture**—e.g., Rajputana aesthetics in Mandalgarh (Rajasthan), Madhubani art in Thawe (Bihar), and Dravidian styles in Tiruvannamalai (Tamil Nadu). This integrates **cultural preservation with public infrastructure**, promoting **inclusive development and tourism**.
- **Boost to Tourism and Employment:**  
PM Modi highlighted that these stations will act as **catalysts for tourism** and generate **employment opportunities**, particularly for the youth. By integrating **cultural identity with mobility**, the scheme aligns with goals of **economic growth and regional development**.
- **Modern Rail Connectivity Expansion:**  
The initiative is part of a broader effort to **modernise India's railway infrastructure**, which includes the introduction of **Vande Bharat, Amrit Bharat, and Namo Bharat trains**. **70 Vande Bharat routes** are now operational, improving connectivity to **remote regions** and enhancing **last-mile accessibility**.
- **Infrastructure Achievements and Future Investment:**  
Over the last **11 years**, over **34,000 km of new railway tracks** have been laid, with the construction of multiple road overbridges and underbridges. The government plans to invest nearly **₹10,000 crore** in railway development in Rajasthan alone in the current year.
- **Relevance to UPSC Civil Services Exam:**
  - *GS Paper 3:* Infrastructure, transportation sector, investment models, tourism and employment generation.
  - *GS Paper 1:* Indian art and architecture, cultural heritage preservation.



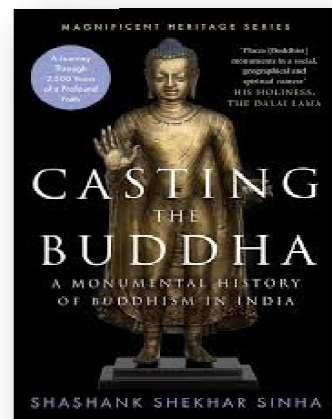


- *GS Paper 2*: Cooperative federalism (Central-State railway projects), governance and development.
- *Constitutional Provisions*:
  - **Seventh Schedule**, Union List – Entry 22 (Railways).
  - **Article 21** (Right to life includes right to mobility and infrastructure).

The Amrit Bharat Station Scheme exemplifies the government's push for **integrated, culturally sensitive, and inclusive infrastructure development**, merging **heritage, modernity, and economic objectives**.

#### 11. Understanding the Social, Cultural, and Geographical Contexts of Buddhism – Key Points

- **Buddhist Philosophy and the Critique of Egoism**:  
Amid modern obsessions with self-promotion and digital identities, Buddhist teachings on **Anatta (non-self)** are gaining relevance. Scholars like Jay Garfield and Maria Heim emphasise Buddha's argument that **clinging to a rigid self-identity** causes suffering. Buddhism promotes understanding the **interdependent nature of existence**, offering a **counter-narrative to modern egoism and materialism**.
- **Continuity of Buddhist Influence in India**:  
Historian Douglas Ober, in *Dust on the Throne*, refutes the belief that Buddhism disappeared from India after the 13th century. He documents how **Buddhism persisted in cultural, textual, and pilgrimage traditions**, influencing movements like **Dalit assertion, Nehruvian secularism**, and even **Hindu reformism**. This challenges the colonial narrative of a linear decline and revival.
- **Role in Modern Indian History and Politics**:  
Buddhism's revival was deeply interwoven with **anti-caste movements led by B.R. Ambedkar**, and **urban Buddhist developments** funded by elites like J.K. Birla. The 1956 mass conversion to Buddhism by Ambedkar's followers was part of a broader **quest for dignity, equality, and social justice**, directly challenging entrenched caste hierarchies.
- **Monuments as Socio-Cultural Ecosystems**:  
Books like *Casting the Buddha* by Shashank Sinha show how Buddhist sites like **Sanchi, Bodh Gaya, and Sarnath** are not just religious relics but **living cultural hubs**, evolving through interactions among monks, laity, traders, and rulers. These sites reflect **continuities in belief systems, rituals, and folklore** spanning 2,500 years.





- **Geographical Spread and Pilgrimage Networks:**

The Buddhist landscape of India includes both ancient centres (like Nalanda, Rajgir) and **modern urban hubs** of Buddhist activity (like Delhi, Mumbai). Trans-regional **pilgrimage networks** helped sustain Buddhist identity across India and South Asia, forming a **pan-Asian cultural geography**.

- **Constitutional and Legal Relevance:**

- **Article 25:** Guarantees freedom of religion, allowing individuals to propagate and practice Buddhism.
- **Article 17:** Abolition of untouchability resonates with **Ambedkarite Buddhism's anti-caste ethos**.
- **SC Judgments:** Buddhism recognised as a distinct religion, and Dalit Buddhists eligible for SC benefits under certain conditions.
- **Government Initiatives:** Sites under ASI protection, Buddhist Circuit schemes under the **Ministry of Tourism**.

**Relevance for UPSC GS Papers:**

- *GS Paper 1:* Indian culture, philosophy, history, and art.
- *GS Paper 2:* Social justice, caste reforms, secularism.
- *GS Paper 4:* Ethical teachings of Buddha—compassion, detachment, and moral conduct.

This topic underscores the **enduring relevance of Buddhist values** in addressing modern challenges such as inequality, identity crises, and social disintegration.

## 12. Why India Needs Stable Urban Forests?

- **Environmental and Ecological Significance:**

Urban forests like Kancha Gachibowli (Hyderabad), Aarey (Mumbai), and Ridge (Delhi) are **critical in mitigating urban pollution**, reducing the **urban heat island effect**, controlling **flooding and erosion**, and sequestering **carbon**. They act as **natural lungs**, filtering PM 2.5 and PM 10 pollutants, and provide **habitat for endangered species**, thus supporting **urban biodiversity**.



- **Public Health and Quality of Urban Life:**

These green spaces play a pivotal role in improving **air quality**, reducing **mental stress**, and enhancing **social and cultural wellbeing** by offering space for recreation and community life. Given the **AQI crisis** in cities like Delhi (494 in 2024), conserving urban forests is directly



linked to **public health and right to life** under **Article 21** of the Constitution.

- **Constitutional and Judicial Safeguards:**

- **Article 21** ensures a right to a clean and healthy environment.
- **Article 48A** (Directive Principles): Mandates the state to protect the environment.
- **Article 51A(g)** (Fundamental Duties): Imposes duty on citizens to protect natural resources.
- **Godavarman case (1996)**: Expanded the legal definition of forests.
- **Judicial interventions**: Supreme Court (Kancha Gachibowli), Delhi HC (Delhi Ridge), SC stay (Aarey 2020), and Rajasthan HC (Baran 2024) have played a proactive role in curbing indiscriminate tree felling.

- **Policy and Mission-Level Support:**

- **National Forest Policy (1988)** and **Green India Mission (2014)** focus on afforestation.
- **Smart Cities Mission** and **AMRUT (2015)** integrate ecological components in urban planning.
- **Nagar Van Yojana (2020)** aims to create **1,000 urban forests by 2027**, and has already led to a **1,445.81 km<sup>2</sup> increase in forest cover** as per **India State of Forest Report 2023**.

- **Challenges and the Role of Civil Society:**

Rapid urbanisation and **land-use changes for industrial and infrastructure projects** pose existential threats to urban forests. Civil society movements (like Save Aarey, Save Kancha Gachibowli) and **citizen participation** are crucial in enforcing ecological accountability and resisting environmental degradation.

- **Way Forward – Sustainable Urban Development:**

Urban planning must prioritise **green infrastructure**, balance development with conservation, and adopt **nature-based solutions**. Regular forest inventories, transparent governance, and **inter-departmental coordination** are essential. Integration of **environmental education**, especially in urban contexts, will strengthen long-term ecological awareness.

### **Relevance for UPSC GS Papers:**

- *GS Paper 1*: Urbanisation and its impact.
- *GS Paper 2*: Constitutional provisions, role of judiciary and civil society.





- *GS Paper 3*: Environment, sustainable development, and urban planning.
- *GS Paper 4*: Environmental ethics and citizen responsibility.

Stable urban forests are not a luxury but a **biological necessity** for India's urban future.

### 13. Establishing the Truth During Conflict: Key Points

#### 1. Challenges of Misinformation in Times of Conflict

- During India-Pakistan tensions (e.g., Operation Sindoor), social media and mainstream media were flooded with misinformation, disinformation, and sensationalism.
- Propaganda primarily targets domestic audiences to boost national morale and manipulate public opinion.
- Objective journalism often collapses under pressure from state interests and public jingoism.

#### 2. Absence of Conflict-Specific Reporting Norms in India

- India lacks a formal regulatory framework or code of ethics specific to wartime journalism.
- General journalism ethics (accuracy, source verification, objectivity) are frequently overridden during conflicts due to state pressure and nationalism.
- Journalists often function as tools of state propaganda, especially in internal conflicts (e.g., Kashmir, Maoist insurgencies).



#### 3. Governmental Control Over Information and Media Censorship

◦ The Indian government has used tools like blocking social media accounts (e.g., 8,000 accounts during Operation Sindoor), filing legal cases, and withholding ad revenue to suppress dissent and control narratives.

◦ Dissenters and fact-checkers (e.g., Hindutva Watch) are labelled "anti-national" and

systematically suppressed.





#### 4. Role of Media and Civil Liberties During Conflict

- The media's normative role of questioning the government and informing citizens is compromised during conflict under the guise of "national interest."
- Public sentiment often aligns with suppressing critical journalism in favour of perceived patriotism, reducing accountability and transparency.

#### 5. Constitutional and Legal Safeguards Undermined

- **Article 19(1)(a)** guarantees freedom of speech and expression, but is often curbed during conflict under **reasonable restrictions** in the name of national security.
- **Article 21** (Right to Life) includes the right to access accurate information, especially when national security is at stake.
- **Supreme Court judgments** (e.g., *Shreya Singhal v. Union of India*, 2015) have emphasized the need to balance free speech with state interests, but implementation is inconsistent.

#### 6. Need for Structural Reforms in Wartime Communication

- There is an urgent need to codify wartime reporting norms, ensure transparent communication from the state, and safeguard press freedom.
- Awareness of psychological and strategic dimensions of information warfare (including use of AI-generated content) is essential for national security and public trust.

These points can be used to frame answers for GS Paper II (Polity and Governance), GS Paper III (Internal Security and Media Ethics), and GS Paper IV (Ethics and Integrity).