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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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I. How India's Trade Deals Became Better Over Time

• Background and Early Experience

- India's initial trade deals, including the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA) with South Korea (2009) and Japan (2011), and the Trade in Goods Agreement with ASEAN (2009), underperformed.
- These deals led to widening trade deficits—India's deficit with ASEAN, for example, grew from \$6 billion in 2009 to \$38 billion.
- Exports stagnated while imports surged, highlighting the asymmetrical tariff concessions India had offered.

• Causes of Underperformance

- **Asymmetrical Concessions:** India was more liberal in tariff reduction compared to partners.
- **Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs):** Particularly Japan's stringent sanitary, phytosanitary, and technical standards restricted Indian exports.
- **Limited Focus on Services:** Agreements were goods-centric, sidelining India's strength in services and professional mobility.
- **Absence of Safeguards:** No strong review or safeguard clauses to protect domestic industries from sudden import surges.



• Recent Strategic Shifts in India's Trade Policy

- India has become selective in choosing trade partners and ensures balanced negotiations.
- New FTAs include comprehensive provisions covering **goods, services, investment, and professional mobility**.
- Stronger safeguard and review mechanisms are now included to protect domestic sectors.

• India–UK Free Trade Agreement (CETA) as a Case Study

- India removed tariffs on 90% of its tariff lines; the UK on 99%.
- Focused heavily on services—India liberalized accounting, financial services, telecom, and environmental services.
- UK granted commercial presence rights in computer services and consultancy, with visas for 1,800 professionals annually.
- India allowed limited tariff cuts on imported cars (with quotas) and permitted UK firms in government procurement, while protecting sensitive sectors like dairy and sugar.

• Impact of Recent Agreements

- The India–UAE FTA (2022) boosted Indian exports by 14% annually.



- The India–Australia FTA (2022) eliminated tariffs on goods and services, leading to over 75% utilization by Indian exporters.
- These deals demonstrate improved balance and higher effectiveness compared to earlier agreements.

- **Constitutional and Legal Framework**

- **Article 246 & 253:** Empowers Parliament to make laws on trade agreements with foreign nations.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Provides the legal basis for regulating foreign trade.
- **World Trade Organization (WTO) Commitments:** India's trade agreements must align with multilateral obligations.

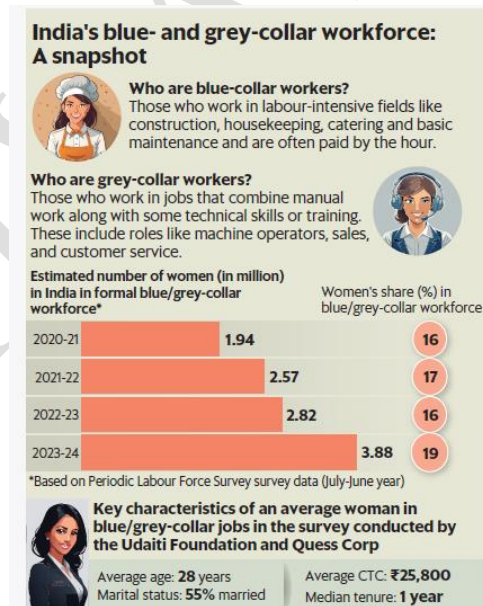
Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

India's trade diplomacy has evolved from asymmetrical and goods-centric deals to balanced, service-oriented, and safeguard-inclusive agreements. The India–UK FTA reflects a pragmatic approach, balancing flexibility with protection of sensitive sectors. For UPSC, this highlights India's changing trade strategy, lessons from past failures, and alignment with constitutional and WTO frameworks, making it crucial for **GS Paper 2 (International Relations)** and **GS Paper 3 (Economy)**.

2. Women in Blue- and Grey-Collar Jobs: Challenges and Trends

- **Definitions and Context**

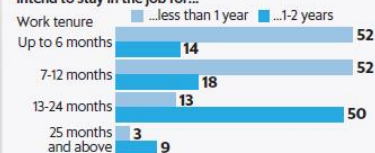
- **Blue-Collar Workers:** Those engaged in labour-intensive work like construction, housekeeping, catering, and maintenance, often paid hourly.
- **Grey-Collar Workers:** Jobs combining manual work with technical skills, such as machine operators, sales, and customer service.



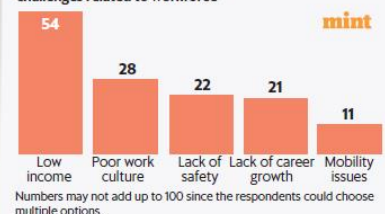
Exit echoes

While the number of women in blue- and grey-collar jobs has increased, sustainability seems to be a challenge. A majority of women who had worked for less than a year expressed the intention to leave within the next 12 months. Low income was the biggest challenge they faced, followed by poor work culture and lack of safety.

Share (in %) of women, by work tenure, who intend to stay in the job for...



Share (in %) of women who identified the following challenges related to workforce



- As per the **Udaiti Foundation–Qness Corp 2025 report**, nearly 3.9 million women are part of India's formal blue- and grey-collar workforce, with an average age of 28 years and an average salary of ₹25,800 per month.

- **Key Challenges Identified**

- **High Attrition:** 52% of women expect to leave within a year; median job tenure is just 1 year.



- **Low Income:** The biggest challenge, with many seeking salary hikes (65% achieved better pay when switching jobs).
- **Poor Work Culture:** 59% report lack of family time; issues of inflexibility, unsupportive managers, and unclear expectations.
- **Safety Concerns:** 22% women report unsafe conditions due to lack of CCTV, lighting, or helplines.
- **Mobility and Infrastructure Issues**
 - One in five women face mobility-related challenges such as long travel time and high commuting costs.
 - **Commuting Trends:** 59% unmarried women rely on public transport, while more married women use personal vehicles.
 - Inadequate or unsafe public transport adds to safety concerns and restricts participation.
- **Workforce Retention and Exit Reasons**
 - Rigid work cultures and lack of flexibility deter long-term participation across all age groups.
 - Major reasons for exit: inadequate salary, unsafe conditions, lack of childcare, and poor career growth opportunities.
 - Former employees highlighted **better salary, work near home, training/skilling, and childcare support** as key incentives for rejoining.
- **Constitutional and Legal Framework**
 - **Article 15 & 16:** Prohibit discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity in employment.
 - **Article 42:** Directs the State to ensure just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief.
 - **Factories Act, 1948 & Shops and Establishments Acts:** Regulate working hours, safety, and welfare of workers.
 - **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013:** Provides for safe workplaces.
 - **Code on Wages, 2019 and Code on Social Security, 2020:** Guarantee minimum wages and welfare benefits.
- **Way Forward**
 - Enhancing **wages and career growth** opportunities to reduce attrition.
 - Strengthening **workplace safety** measures, including CCTV and helplines.
 - Expanding **childcare facilities, flexible working hours, and skilling programs**.
 - Improving **public transport safety and accessibility**, especially for women in peri-urban and rural areas.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The participation of women in India's blue- and grey-collar workforce is vital for inclusive growth but remains fragile due to low pay, poor work culture, and safety issues. Addressing these challenges through



legal safeguards, gender-sensitive policies, and infrastructural support is crucial for enhancing women's workforce participation. This topic is highly relevant for **GS Paper 1 (Society and Women Issues)**, **GS Paper 2 (Governance and Social Justice)**, and **GS Paper 3 (Inclusive Growth and Employment)**.

3. India Nears Combat Drone Deal with US

- **Background and Context**

- India is in advanced talks with US-based **Shield AI** under a \$4.5-billion emergency procurement programme launched after *Operation Sindoor*.
- The deal focuses on procuring **V-Bat combat drones** for the Indian Air Force (IAF), with an initial contract worth \$35 million.
- A joint venture (JV) of \$90 million between **JSW Defence (JSW Group)** and Shield AI will facilitate transfer of drone technology to India.



- **Significance of the Deal**

- Marks a **localization blueprint** for advanced defence technology, reducing long-term import dependence.
- Enhances India's **combat drone capability**, strengthening surveillance, strike power, and intelligence in modern warfare.
- Aligns with India's push for **self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat)** in defence procurement.

- **Strategic and Security Implications**

- Helps India counter regional threats, particularly with increasing use of drones in modern conflicts.
- Boosts IAF's operational preparedness and rapid deployment under emergency procurement.
- Supports India's defence diplomacy with the US, strengthening bilateral ties under the **India-US Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)**.

- **Economic and Industrial Impact**

- The JV ensures **technology transfer**, fostering indigenous manufacturing capacity.
- Supports the **Defence Production and Export Promotion Policy (DPEPP) 2020** goal of achieving \$25 billion defence turnover by 2025, including \$5 billion exports.
- Encourages private sector participation in high-end defence production.

- **Constitutional and Legal Framework**

- **Article 246 & 53**: Defence falls under the Union List; controlled by the Union Government.
- **Article 51(c)**: Promotes respect for international law and treaties (relevant for defence imports/agreements).
- **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020**: Governs procurement with emphasis on indigenization and strategic partnership model.



- **Make in India** and **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**: Policy frameworks supporting domestic defence production.

- **Way Forward**

- Gradual scaling up of indigenous production with full technology absorption.
- Enhanced R&D collaboration with foreign firms for next-gen drone technology.
- Strengthening cyber-security and counter-drone systems alongside procurement to ensure robust national security.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The India–US combat drone deal underlines a paradigm shift in India’s defence procurement strategy, balancing immediate operational needs with long-term self-reliance goals. With strong localization provisions, it not only enhances India’s military capabilities but also boosts domestic defence manufacturing. This is highly relevant for **GS Paper 2 (India–US Relations, Security)** and **GS Paper 3 (Defence, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Technology Transfer)**.

4. India–UK SPS Subcommittee under the Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

- **Background and Context**

- India and the UK have agreed to set up a **subcommittee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures** as part of their FTA.
- Objective: To address regulatory barriers in agricultural and food trade while safeguarding public health through scientifically backed standards.
- The first meeting is expected within a year of the FTA’s entry into force, followed by annual reviews.

- **Significance of SPS Subcommittee**

- Ensures that plant, animal, and food safety rules do not become **unjustified barriers to market access**.
- Expected to resolve issues such as fertilizer residue in Indian agri-exports, improving global trust in Indian produce.
- Facilitates **mutual recognition of certifications**, reducing compliance costs and delays in shipment approvals.



- **Impact on Agricultural Trade**

- India gains **duty-free access to over 95%** of the UK’s agricultural imports (estimated at \$85–88 billion in 2024).
- Indian agricultural and processed food exports to the UK projected to **rise by over 50% in the next three years**, bringing them at par with exports from the EU, South Africa, Turkey, Canada, Peru, and Vietnam.
- In FY25, India’s agricultural exports to the UK stood at **\$784.57 million**, with basmati rice, fish, meat, and processed seafood among major products.



- **Challenges and Concerns**

- The UK has stringent safety stipulations compared to relatively lax Indian standards.
- Past experiences show SPS negotiations often move slowly; risk of prolonged and inconclusive discussions remains.
- Experts suggest prioritizing **top 100 agricultural export items** with a **time-bound approach** to resolve SPS issues effectively.

- **Constitutional and Legal Framework**

- **Article 246 & 253:** Empower the Union Government to legislate on international trade agreements.
- **Article 19(1)(g):** Protects the right to trade and profession, subject to reasonable restrictions.
- **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSSAI):** Governs domestic food safety standards and aligns them with international norms.
- **World Trade Organization (WTO) – SPS Agreement:** Provides the global framework for measures related to food safety and animal/plant health.

- **Way Forward**

- Enhance domestic **food safety infrastructure** to meet global standards.
- Build **capacity for testing, certification, and traceability** to reduce rejection of shipments.
- Strengthen bilateral **technical cooperation and information exchange** to ensure predictable and transparent trade.
- Adopt **scientific validation and digital certification systems** for faster and safer clearance.

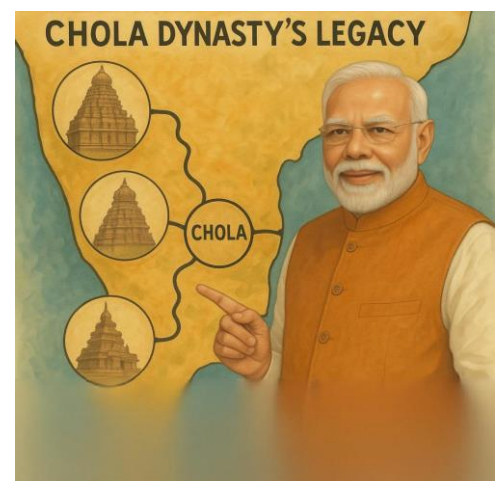
Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The India–UK SPS subcommittee represents a crucial step in boosting India’s agricultural exports by aligning safety standards with international norms while reducing trade barriers. It ensures better market access, enhances global credibility of Indian agri-products, and strengthens India’s position in global trade. This is highly relevant for **GS Paper 2 (International Relations, India–UK ties)** and **GS Paper 3 (Economy, Agriculture, WTO and Trade Policy)**.

5. Chola Dynasty’s Legacy as a Roadmap for Modern India

- **Historical Significance of the Chola Dynasty**

- The Cholas, especially **Rajaraja Chola I** and **Rajendra Chola I**, are remembered for their **military might, administrative acumen, naval strength, and cultural achievements**.
- Rajendra Chola I built **Gangaikonda Cholapuram**, the **Brihadisvara Temple**, and the massive **Cholagangam Lake** after his successful northern expedition around 1,000 years ago.





- The Chola Empire extended diplomatic and trade relations to **Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Southeast Asia**, showcasing India's maritime power and global engagement.
- **Key Contributions of the Chola Administration**
 - **Strong Navy and Defence:** Rajaraja Chola developed a formidable navy, further strengthened by Rajendra Chola, ensuring maritime security and expansion.
 - **Local Governance:** Introduced efficient **village-level self-governance** institutions, a model often cited as a precursor to modern Panchayati Raj.
 - **Cultural and Economic Flourishing:** Promoted temple architecture, literature, and trade networks, enhancing India's cultural prestige and economic prosperity.
- **Modern Relevance Highlighted by PM Modi**
 - PM Modi described the Chola legacy as an **ancient roadmap for a developed India**, emphasizing unity, naval strength, national security, and safeguarding of core values.
 - He stressed the need to **strengthen defence forces, explore new opportunities, and ensure cultural continuity** in line with the Chola vision.
 - A **commemorative coin** was released in honour of Rajendra Chola I, and the Centre announced plans to install **statues of Rajaraja and Rajendra Chola** in Tamil Nadu to enhance historical consciousness.
- **Link to National Security and Operation Sindoor**
 - Drawing a parallel, the PM noted that India's **decisive response during Operation Sindoor** reflected the Chola spirit of protecting sovereignty and maintaining maritime strength.
 - Reinforces India's commitment to strong military preparedness and strategic foresight.
- **Constitutional and Legal Framework**
 - **Article 51A(f):** Citizens' duty to value and preserve the rich heritage of the composite culture of India.
 - **Seventh Schedule, Union List:** Defence, foreign affairs, and maritime security under the Union Government's domain.
 - **Directive Principles of State Policy (Articles 36–51):** Promote cultural heritage, economic development, and national security.
- **Way Forward**
 - Learning from Chola-era naval and administrative models to strengthen **maritime security and local governance**.
 - Expanding **cultural diplomacy and trade ties** in the Indian Ocean and Indo-Pacific region.
 - Promoting heritage conservation as part of India's **soft power diplomacy**.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The Chola dynasty's legacy offers timeless lessons in **strong defence, efficient administration, maritime trade, and cultural diplomacy**, aligning with India's modern aspirations of becoming a developed and secure nation. The PM's reference underscores its significance for **GS Paper 1 (History and Culture)**, **GS Paper 2 (Governance and International Relations)**, and **GS Paper 3 (Security and Maritime Strategy)**.



6. Demand for Devadasi Survey in Karnataka Without Age Limit

• Background and Context

- The **Devadasi system**, an ancient practice of dedicating women to temples, was officially banned in Karnataka under the **Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1982**.
- Despite the ban, large numbers of women continue to be affected. Previous surveys in **1993–94** and **2007–08** identified 22,873 and 46,660 Devadasis, respectively.
- Activists allege that many women, especially below the age of 45, were excluded in earlier surveys due to restrictive criteria.

• Current Developments

- The **Karnataka government** announced a third survey in the 2024–25 Budget, with directions from the **State Human Rights Commission** to complete it by October 2025.
- The survey is to be carried out through taluk-level child development officers, requiring Devadasis to voluntarily register.
- **National Law School of India University (NLSIU)** has petitioned the Chief Minister to conduct the survey **without an age limit** to ensure inclusivity.



• Key Issues with Previous Surveys

- **Exclusion due to Age Limits:** Past surveys restricted identification to women above 45, leaving out younger victims.
- **Accessibility Issues:** Women had to visit government offices to register, discouraging participation due to stigma, lack of mobility, and fear of exposure.
- **Undercounting:** Activists estimate that as many women remain outside the official lists as those identified.

• Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act, 1982:** Criminalizes the dedication of women as Devadasis.
- **Article 14 and 21 of the Constitution:** Guarantee equality before law and protection of life and personal liberty.
- **Article 23:** Prohibits trafficking and forced labour, applicable to Devadasi-like exploitative practices.
- **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993:** Empowers the State Human Rights Commission to direct government action.

• Way Forward

- Conduct a **door-to-door survey without age restrictions** to ensure accurate identification.



- Provide **rehabilitation, education, healthcare, and livelihood support** to identified Devadasis.
- Implement **awareness campaigns** to reduce stigma and ensure reporting.
- Strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure full enforcement of the 1982 Act.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The demand for a comprehensive, inclusive Devadasi survey highlights persistent socio-legal challenges despite decades of prohibition. Ensuring justice and rehabilitation for Devadasis is critical to upholding constitutional rights, human dignity, and gender justice. This topic is relevant for **GS Paper 1 (Indian Society – Women Issues)**, **GS Paper 2 (Governance and Social Justice)**, and **GS Paper 4 (Ethics – Human Dignity and Rights)**.

7. Government Push for Setting up Allied and Healthcare Councils

• Background and Context

- The **National Commission for Allied and Healthcare Professions (NCAHP)**, created under the **NCAHP Act, 2021**, is the apex body regulating training, standards, and professional conduct of allied and healthcare professionals.
- Allied healthcare professionals include technicians, therapists, and support staff who form a crucial part of the healthcare system.
- On **17 July 2025**, the NCAHP issued a letter urging states and union territories to immediately establish their respective Allied and Healthcare Councils.

• Current Status and Concerns

- **11 States/UTs** (including Delhi, Haryana, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Uttarakhand) have not yet created councils despite the legal mandate.
- Another **11 States** (including Bihar, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, and West Bengal) have formed councils but failed to meet the requirements of the 2021 Act.
- The delay raises concerns about the **quality, regulation, and uniformity of healthcare services** across the country.

• Significance of the Councils

- Ensures **standardized training and certification** of allied healthcare workers.
- Improves **quality assurance, accountability, and ethical conduct** in healthcare delivery.
- Strengthens India's healthcare system by ensuring a **skilled, well-regulated workforce**, crucial for universal health coverage.

• Legal and Constitutional Framework





- **NCAHP Act, 2021:** Provides for the establishment of a National and State Allied and Healthcare Councils.
- **Article 21:** Ensures right to health as part of the right to life, making quality healthcare a constitutional necessity.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 47):** Duty of the State to raise nutrition and standard of living and improve public health.
- **Concurrent List (Seventh Schedule):** Both Union and States empowered to legislate on health matters, ensuring cooperative federalism.
- **Challenges in Implementation**
 - Lack of administrative preparedness and funding in several states.
 - Shortage of trained personnel to run the councils effectively.
 - Variation in healthcare infrastructure and priorities across states.
- **Way Forward**
 - States must **expedite council formation** with adequate resources and trained staff.
 - Ensure compliance with the Act by setting up **robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks**.
 - Encourage **public–private partnerships** for skill development of allied healthcare professionals.
 - Strengthen **digital record-keeping and certification systems** for transparency and efficiency.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Timely establishment of Allied and Healthcare Councils is critical to ensuring a well-regulated, skilled, and accountable healthcare workforce in India. It strengthens the foundation for affordable and quality healthcare, aligning with India's goal of Universal Health Coverage. The issue holds high relevance for **GS Paper 2 (Governance – Health, Regulatory Bodies)** and **GS Paper 3 (Social Justice – Public Health Infrastructure)**.

8. India's Projected Economic Growth in FY26

- **Background and Growth Outlook**
 - According to **RBI Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** member Nagesh Kumar, India's economy is expected to grow **over 6.5% in FY26**, continuing the momentum from the previous fiscal where growth stood at 6.5%.
 - India is described as a **“bright spot” in the global economy**, with growth driven largely by **domestic consumption and investment** rather than exports.
 - The growth trajectory is expected to strengthen further to **7–7.5% in the coming years**.





- **Comparison with Global Scenario**

- Over a **third of global economies are under debt crisis**, while many advanced economies face high inflation and slow growth.
- India's relative insulation from global shocks comes from its **domestic demand-driven model**, reducing vulnerability to external trade fluctuations.

- **Inflation and Monetary Policy**

- Current **Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation is around 2%**, within the RBI's target band of **4% ± 2%**, reflecting the effectiveness of MPC's policy measures.
- Stable inflation provides a conducive environment for sustained growth and investment.

- **Constitutional and Legal Framework**

- **Article 38 & 39 (DPSP)**: Mandate the State to ensure economic growth and equitable distribution of resources.
- **RBI Act, 1934 (as amended)**: Empowers the RBI to manage monetary policy through the MPC, ensuring price stability and supporting growth.
- **FRBM Act, 2003**: Ensures fiscal discipline and macroeconomic stability.

- **Key Drivers of Growth**

- Strong domestic **consumption and private investment**.
- Policy support from **structural reforms, infrastructure push, and digital economy expansion**.
- Low inflation and a **favorable demographic dividend** strengthening long-term prospects.

- **Way Forward**

- Continue **monetary stability** while fostering growth-oriented fiscal policies.
- Strengthen **manufacturing, green energy, and digital sectors** to sustain high growth.
- Enhance **employment opportunities** to translate GDP growth into inclusive development.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

India's projected growth above 6.5% in FY26 reflects strong fundamentals and resilience amidst global economic uncertainty. Stable inflation, domestic demand, and policy reforms reinforce India's role as a global growth leader. This is highly relevant for **GS Paper 3 (Indian Economy – Growth, Inflation, Monetary Policy)** and **GS Paper 2 (Governance – Policy and Planning)**.

9. China's Rare Earths Dominance: Lessons from Japan for the U.S.

- **Definition and Importance of Rare Earths**

- Rare earth elements (REEs) are a group of 17 chemical elements crucial for manufacturing electronics, electric vehicles, defense technologies, and renewable energy components.
- They include light rare earths (like neodymium) and heavy rare earths (like dysprosium and terbium), essential for strong permanent magnets and advanced technology.



- **China's Strategic Dominance and Japan's Experience**

- China controls about **84% of the global rare earth market** as of 2021, up from 75% in 2013, and has used export restrictions as a geopolitical coercive tool, notably in **2010 during a diplomatic clash with Japan**.
- Japan was heavily dependent on China for rare earths (about **70% as of 2024**) despite efforts since 2010 to diversify supplies, notably through investment in Australia's Lynas Rare Earths.
- Partial diversification left Japan vulnerable; costs and logistics made complete independence expensive, causing reliance to persist.

- **Economic and Strategic Implications**

- Rare earth minerals are critical for high-tech industries, defense manufacturing, and green energy solutions, making their supply chain security vital for national security and economic stability.
- Japan's case shows that **reducing dependence without full diversification may still leave a country exposed to supply risks** and geopolitical leverage.

- **U.S. Response and Policy Measures**

- Following a rare earth export control incident by China in 2025, the **U.S. Department of Defense invested in domestic mining and refining companies** like MP Materials to develop a secure supply chain.
- The U.S. aims to increase domestic production, promote recycling, and develop alternative technologies requiring fewer rare earths.

- **Challenges in Diversification**

- Mining and refining rare earths is capital-intensive and environmentally challenging.
- Heavy rare earths are less abundant and more difficult to extract and process.
- Industry reluctance and high costs slow down the shift away from Chinese dominance.



- **Way Forward and Strategic Lessons**

- Countries must **invest heavily in alternative supplies and domestic capabilities** to reduce geopolitical vulnerabilities.
- Collaboration with allied countries rich in rare earths, such as Australia and France, is crucial.
- Innovation in material science to reduce rare earth dependency and recycling must be prioritized.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

China's use of rare earths as a strategic tool underscores the importance of securing critical mineral supply chains for national security and economic resilience. Japan's experience offers lessons on the risks of partial diversification and the need for long-term investment. This topic is relevant for **GS Paper 3 (Security Issues, Science and Technology, and Economic Development)** and **GS Paper 2 (International Relations and Strategic Affairs)**.



10. Clearing the Air on 'Citizenship' in Bihar Poll Roll Revision

- **Definition and Legal Basis of Citizenship for Electoral Rights**

Citizenship of India is a fundamental criterion for voter registration and holding legislative office as per the Constitution of India. Article 326 mandates elections based on adult suffrage limited to Indian citizens aged 18 and above. The Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RPA 1950) governs electoral roll preparation, explicitly disqualifying non-citizens from voter registration (Section 16(1)(a)) and allowing deletion of their names if erroneously included (Section 16(2)).

- **Role and Powers of the Election Commission of India (ECI)**

Article 324 vests the ECI with superintendence, direction, and control over electoral roll preparation and election conduct. It is the ECI's constitutional duty to verify citizenship claims during voter registration and delete non-citizens' names on complaints or credible doubts. Failure to do so undermines electoral integrity and violates constitutional mandates.

- **Constitutional Provisions on Legislative Membership**

Articles 102 and 191 disqualify non-citizens from being elected as Members of Parliament or State Legislatures. Citizenship is thus both a prerequisite for electoral participation and legislative membership, ensuring sovereignty and democratic legitimacy. Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders are not entitled to voter registration under the Citizenship Act, 1955 (Sections 7A and 7B(2)).

- **Distinction Between Aadhaar and Citizenship**

Aadhaar, governed by the Aadhaar Act, 2016, is a biometric identity tool for residents but does not confer or prove citizenship (Section 9). Hence, possession of Aadhaar cannot substitute citizenship proof for electoral registration.

- **Judicial Interpretations**

Supreme Court rulings, such as in *Dr. Yogesh Bhardwaj vs State of U.P.* (1990), clarify that only lawful residents can claim rights tied to residence; illegal stay does not confer ordinary residence or citizenship rights relevant to electoral participation.

- **Conclusion and UPSC Relevance**

Citizenship verification in electoral roll revisions is constitutionally mandated and vital for protecting democratic processes. Political objections to citizenship checks reveal misunderstandings of constitutional and legal frameworks. This topic is essential for UPSC preparations, especially in **GS Paper 2 (Polity and Governance)** and **GS Paper 1 (Indian Constitution and Electoral System)**, highlighting the significance of constitutional provisions governing elections and citizenship rights.



11. Understanding Russia's Taliban Gauntlet

- **Russia's Recognition of the Taliban Government**

On July 3, 2025, Russia officially recognized the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), accrediting the Taliban's ambassador in Moscow. This marks a major shift from Russia's earlier stance (1996-2001) when it opposed the Taliban, supported the Northern Alliance, and joined UN sanctions against the group.

- **Historical Context and Changing Dynamics**

Previously, the Taliban were hostile to Russia, supporting Chechen militants and opposing Russian



operations in Chechnya. Post-9/11, Russia cooperated with the US-led mission against the Taliban. However, with the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and rising instability, Russia gradually engaged unofficially with the Taliban, balancing its security interests in the region.

- **Strategic Motivations for Russia**

Russia views the Taliban as the only effective political force in Afghanistan and potential allies in counter-terrorism, particularly against the Islamic State Khorasan Province (IS-K). Despite officially recognizing the Taliban, the Russian security establishment remains cautious, keeping the Taliban listed as terrorists and reserving the right to reverse recognition if necessary.

- **Regional and Geopolitical Implications**

Russia's recognition may influence Central Asian countries and China to follow suit, prioritizing pragmatic engagement over concerns about governance, inclusivity, or human rights issues under the Taliban regime. Russia aims to expand regional influence and reduce US presence in Afghanistan.

- **Impact on India-Russia-Taliban Relations**

India is expected to maintain cautious engagement with the Taliban without formal recognition, focusing on counter-terrorism cooperation and humanitarian aid. Russia's recognition is unlikely to significantly affect India's Afghanistan policy, which balances diplomatic contacts with non-recognition of Taliban legitimacy.

- **Conclusion and UPSC Relevance**

Russia's recognition of the Taliban represents a pragmatic shift reflecting geopolitical realities and security concerns. This development is important for UPSC aspirants studying **International Relations, India's Neighbourhood Policy, and Counter-terrorism Strategy** (GS Paper 2 and 3). It highlights changing global alignments, the challenges of state recognition, and balancing values with strategic interests in foreign policy.



12. Preparing India Against Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)

- **Recent GLOF Events and Impact in Nepal**

Nepal has witnessed multiple catastrophic GLOF events recently, including the July 2025 flood along the Lende River caused by a burst supra-glacial lake in Tibet. These events damaged infrastructure, including hydro-power plants and critical bridges, highlighting the trans-boundary nature of GLOF risks and the urgent need for cross-border early warning systems.

- **Types of Glacial Lakes in Indian Himalayan Region (IHR)**

The IHR has approximately 28,000 glacial lakes, mainly of two types: (1) Supra-glacial lakes formed on glacier surfaces from meltwater, prone to summer melting, and (2) Moraine-dammed lakes formed behind natural debris dams at glacier snouts, susceptible to sudden dam failure.

- **Nature and Causes of GLOFs**

About two-thirds of GLOF events are triggered by ice avalanches or landslides, while the rest occur due to meltwater pressure on weak moraine dams or earthquakes. Rising global temperatures and glacial melt, combined with the high altitude and remote location of lakes, increase GLOF risks in the Himalayas.



- **India's Vulnerability and Monitoring Challenges**

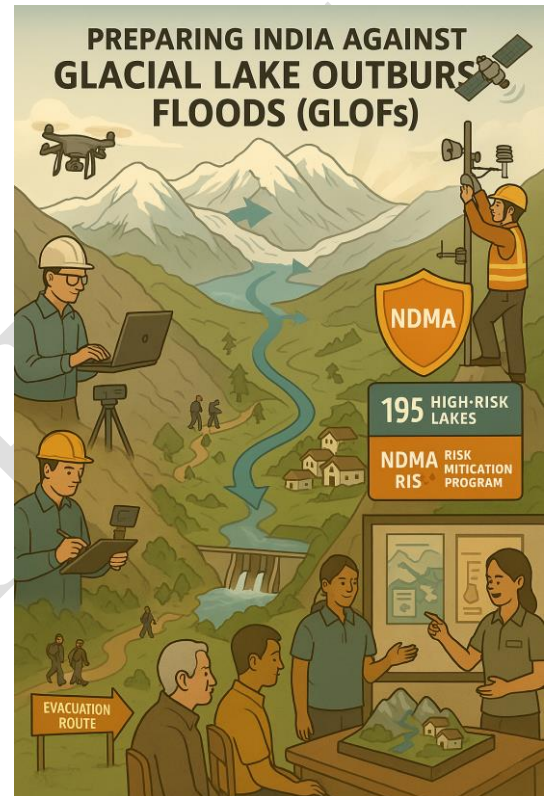
India hosts around 7,500 glacial lakes above 4,500 meters, mostly inaccessible for year-round monitoring. Lack of weather stations and limited real-time data collection impede early warning. Remote sensing and surface area monitoring are post-facto measures and insufficient for risk prediction.

- **NDMA's Proactive Mitigation Measures**

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has shifted focus from disaster response to risk reduction through the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction (CoDRR). NDMA's \$20 million national programme targets 195 high-risk glacial lakes for hazard assessment, Automated Weather and Water Stations (AWWS) installation, early warning systems, risk mitigation (water drawdown, retention structures), and community engagement.

- **Use of Advanced Technology and Community Engagement**

Innovative Indian scientific methods such as SAR interferometry (detecting micro-changes in slopes via satellite imagery) and Electrical Resistivity Tomography (to detect ice cores in moraine dams) are being deployed to improve risk assessment. Local community involvement is critical to ensure successful monitoring and mitigation in the culturally sensitive Himalayan region.



Key Definitions

- *Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF)*: A sudden release of water from a glacial lake due to dam failure.
- *Supra-glacial lake*: Meltwater lake formed on the surface of glaciers.
- *Moraine-dammed lake*: Lake formed behind a natural dam of glacial debris or ice.
- *SAR Interferometry*: Satellite-based remote sensing technique to detect tiny ground movements.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

With climate change accelerating glacier melt, the threat of GLOFs poses serious challenges for India's Himalayan region, impacting lives, infrastructure, and hydro-power projects. NDMA's proactive, technology-driven risk reduction strategy marks a paradigm shift essential for disaster preparedness and sustainable development. This topic is crucial for UPSC preparation under **Environment and Ecology (GS Paper 3)**, **Disaster Management**, and **Geography**, especially in understanding climate change impacts and trans-boundary disaster risk cooperation.