



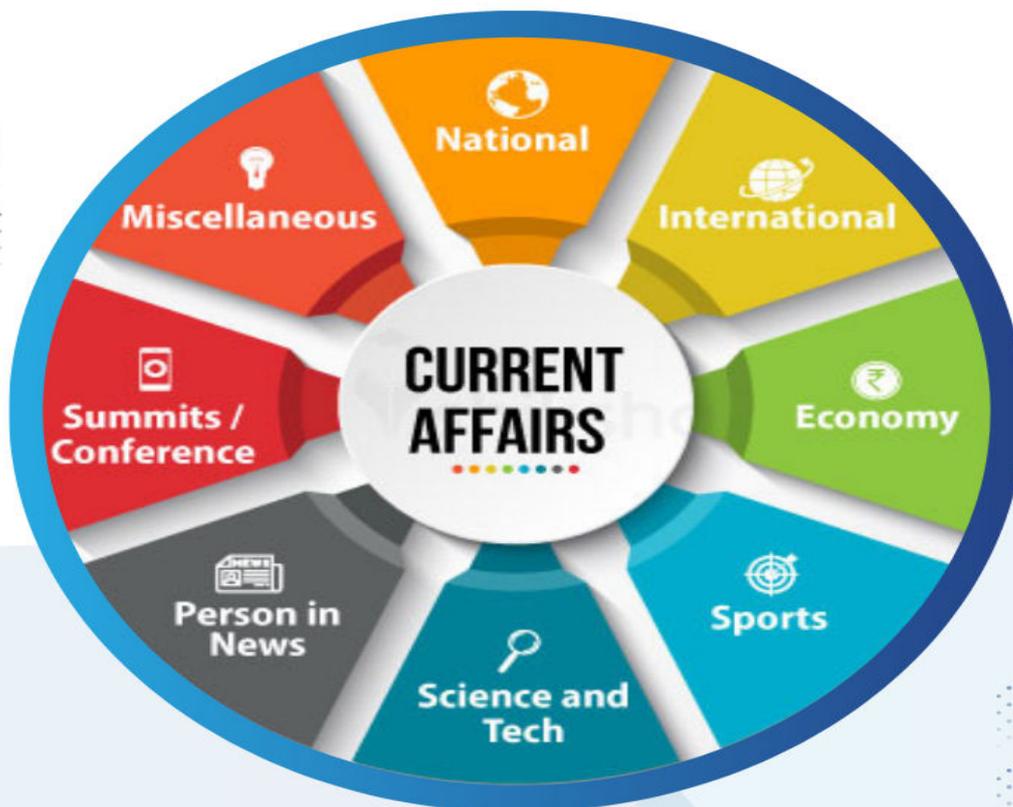
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**VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY**  
&  
**STUDY CENTRE**

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

**DATE: 09/09/2025 (TUESDAY)**



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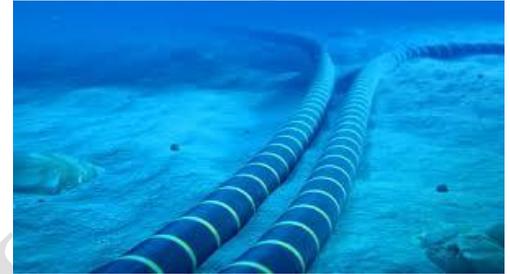


## 1. Importance of Undersea Cables

- **Definition:** Undersea cables are fibre-optic cables laid on the ocean floor that transmit digital data (messages, videos, calls) across continents.
- They carry **over 95% of global internet traffic**, making them the backbone of global digital connectivity.
- There are **559 active subsea cables worldwide** with a massive capacity of 16,000 terabits per second (Tbps). India currently has **17 such cables**, with companies like Google, Meta, Airtel, and Reliance Jio investing in further expansion.

### Causes and Impact of Cable Damage

- **Causes:** Ship anchors, fishing nets, earthquakes, and increasingly **sabotage in geopolitically sensitive areas**.
- **Impact:** Internet slowdowns, degraded connectivity, and disruption of financial services, cloud platforms, and global communications.
- Example: The **SMW4 and IMEWE cables** in the Red Sea were recently cut, affecting connectivity in India, Pakistan, and beyond.



### Repair Challenges

- Around **150–200 faults occur annually** in global subsea cables.
- Repair usually takes **weeks to months**; in India, the average is **3–5 months** due to reliance on foreign repair services and lack of indigenous repair vessels.
- Delays are worsened by **high costs, customs clearance, and multiple permits** for repair ships.

### Strategic Importance of the Red Sea

- The **Red Sea is a critical hub**, linking Europe, Asia, and Africa with **15+ subsea cables**.
- It carries **80% of Asia's westward internet traffic and 17% of global traffic**.
- Geopolitical tensions—like **Houthi rebel attacks on ships and cables**—pose severe risks to global internet stability.

### Mitigation by Companies

- Operators **reroute internet traffic** through alternate cables to maintain services.
- However, rerouting increases **latency** and can affect productivity in sectors like IT, finance, and outsourcing.
- Expansion of subsea cable networks is seen as vital for **India's growing data economy** and Global Capability Centres (GCCs).

### Constitutional & Legal Dimensions

- **National Security Concerns:** Disruption in undersea cables can affect critical sectors (defence, banking, governance), making it a **strategic infrastructure issue**.



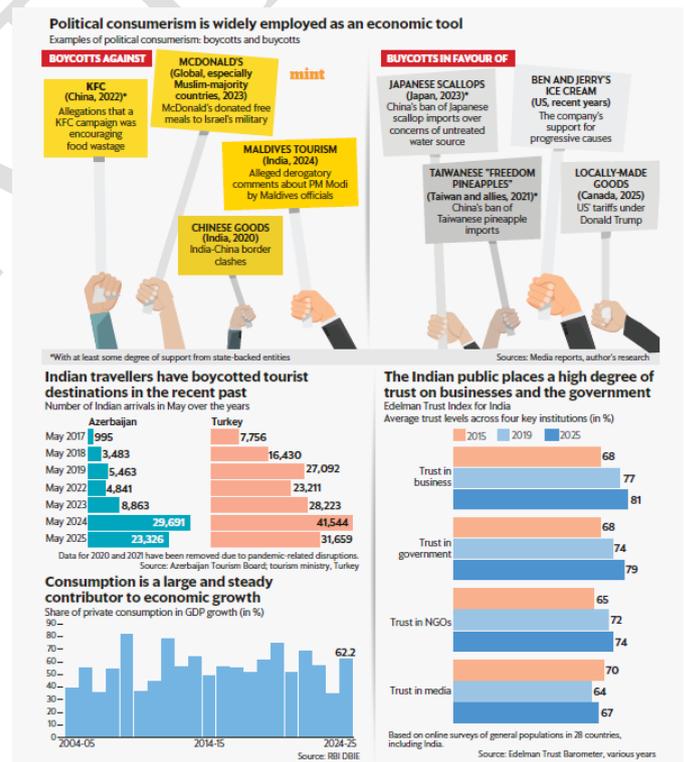
- **Legal Provisions:** Undersea cable protection is linked with the **Indian Telegraph Act, 1885**, the **Information Technology Act, 2000**, and global frameworks like the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**, which obligates nations to protect submarine cables.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

- Undersea cables are the **arteries of the digital economy**, ensuring global trade, communication, and strategic security.
- India's dependence on limited cable routes and foreign repair facilities makes it vulnerable.
- Strengthening **domestic repair capability, securing strategic sea routes, and diversifying digital infrastructure** is crucial for cyber and national security.
- **UPSC Relevance:** This topic links to **GS Paper 3 (Science & Tech, Internal Security, Infrastructure, Economy)** and **GS Paper 2 (International Relations, Global Governance)**, testing understanding of **technology–security–geopolitics interlinkages**.

## 2. Concept of 'Boycott' and India's Push

- **Definition:** *Boycott* refers to consumer preference for purchasing goods that align with national or political values, in contrast to a boycott which avoids certain goods. It is a form of **political consumerism**, where choices are influenced by national or strategic interests rather than price/quality.
- India's **'buy and make swadeshi'** call is not protectionist but aimed at **boosting local production and consumption** to counter the impact of external tariffs (e.g., US tariffs under Trump).



### Why It Is Different from Past Swadeshi Movements

- Unlike the **1970s–80s protectionism**, today's India actively **welcomes foreign capital and technology** while promoting domestic production.
- The push is **geo-economically driven** (trade wars, global tensions) rather than rooted in anti-foreign sentiment.
- It encourages re-routing of export capacity towards the domestic market through consumer nationalism.

### Boycott vs Buycott and Global Examples

- Boycotts have been powerful tools in **trade wars and political conflicts**; e.g., Indian consumer boycotts of Turkish and Azerbaijani goods, or **China's retaliatory boycott against South Korea (THAAD issue, 2016)** causing \$7.3 billion in losses.
- India's approach is primarily a **buycott**, urging support for local brands instead of outright bans on foreign goods.



## Economic Potential of India's Buycott Strategy

- **Private consumption accounts for 3–4% of India's 6–7% GDP growth**, making it a reliable growth engine.
- Favorable factors: potential **GST cuts**, **monetary easing**, and **export support policies**.
- High **public trust in government (79%) and business (81%)**, according to the Edelman Trust Index, enhances collective acceptance of swadeshi initiatives.

## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 39(b) & (c)** (Directive Principles) encourage distribution of resources for common good and prevention of concentration of wealth, supporting swadeshi-oriented policies.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992** empowers the government to regulate imports/exports during global trade disruptions.
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan** framework aligns with the buycott model by promoting local industries under WTO-compatible policies.

## Strategic Significance and Challenges

- India lacks China's **global trade dominance**, limiting the coercive impact of boycotts.
- However, a buycott strategy can **strengthen domestic industries, generate employment, and reduce vulnerability to global tariff wars**.
- It also projects **consumer nationalism as an economic tool** in a multipolar trade order.

## Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

- India's buycott movement blends **economic nationalism with global integration**, aiming to achieve **self-reliance by 2047**.
- It is not protectionism, but a calibrated strategy to harness **domestic demand as a buffer against global shocks**.
- **UPSC Relevance:** Important for **GS Paper 3 (Economy – Growth, Trade, Atmanirbhar Bharat, Globalization)** and **GS Paper 2 (Governance, Policy Measures, International Trade Relations)**. It can also be linked to **Essay topics** on consumer nationalism, globalization, and self-reliance.

## 3. India's Semiconductor Mission Expansion

- **Definition:** The **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)** is a government initiative launched in 2021 to develop a complete chip and fab ecosystem in India through incentives, infrastructure, and policy support.
- The government is now preparing to **expand ISM funding from \$10 billion to \$20 billion**, with proposals submitted by the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) to the Finance Ministry.

## Global Context and Competition

- **US Chips Act:** \$52 billion in subsidies and tax credits.
- **EU Chips Act:** €43 billion mobilized in public–private investments.



- **China, Japan, South Korea:** Committing billions through tax breaks, grants, and direct state funding.
- India seeks to position itself as a **stable, open economy** for global chip firms, unlike the US (policy uncertainty) and China (closed, self-reliant model).

### Strategic Importance for India

- Semiconductor fabs planned in India will produce chips ranging from **110 nm to 28 nm**, critical for industrial use cases like **smart meters, power grids, monitoring sensors, and manufacturing automation**.
- India aims to incentivize **chip design patents, display fabs, robust supply chains, and indigenous semiconductor startups**.
- A strengthened ISM 2.0 would reduce **import dependency** and increase **strategic autonomy** in critical technology.

### Policy and Institutional Framework

- **Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme:** Supports Indian startups in chip design and innovation.
- **Ease of Doing Business & Policy Stability:** Crucial for attracting global chipmakers, as highlighted by industry experts.
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan:** The chip mission aligns with India’s broader self-reliance framework in strategic technologies.

### Constitutional & Legal Dimensions

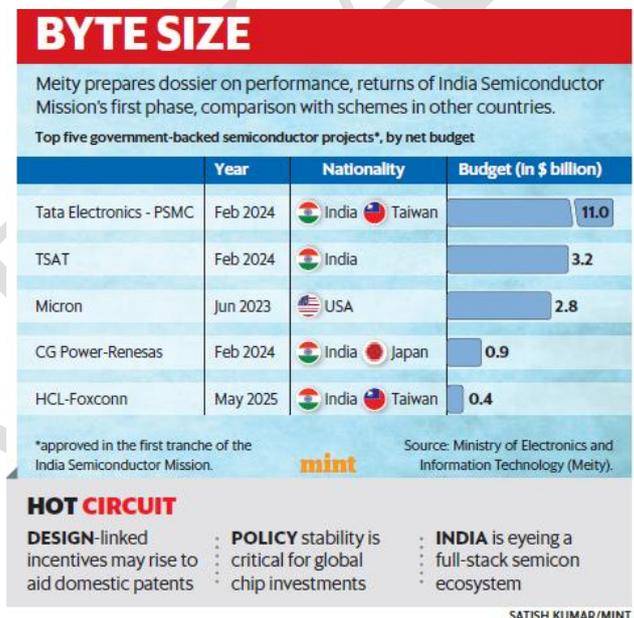
- **Article 39(b) (DPSP):** Directs that material resources be distributed to serve the common good—relevant for developing a national semiconductor ecosystem.
- **IT Act, 2000 and Electronics Manufacturing Policies:** Provide the legal framework for digital infrastructure and technology promotion.
- **National Security Considerations:** Semiconductors are essential for defence, space, telecom, and cyber security, linking the mission to **internal and external security provisions**.

### Challenges and Opportunities

- India’s first phase investments (~\$15 billion, including state support) show progress, with projects like Tata Electronics’ \$11 billion fab with Taiwan’s PSMC and Micron’s testing facilities.
- The next phase must focus on **supply chain integration, R&D support, and faster approvals**.
- India’s consumption-led growth and trust in institutions create a favorable environment, but **long-term policy consistency** will be decisive.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

- India’s semiconductor expansion to \$20 billion is a **strategic techno-economic initiative** to secure its place among the top 5 global semiconductor hubs.





- It not only boosts **manufacturing and jobs** but also strengthens **national security and digital sovereignty**.
- **UPSC Relevance:** Important for **GS Paper 3 (Science & Tech, Economy, Infrastructure, Atmanirbhar Bharat)** and **GS Paper 2 (Governance, International Trade Policies, Strategic Technology)**. It also has implications for **Essay topics on self-reliance, digital economy, and global supply chains**.

#### 4. India–Israel Bilateral Investment Agreement

- **Definition:** A **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)** is a legal framework between two countries to promote and protect investments by ensuring transparency, fair treatment, and dispute resolution mechanisms.
- India and Israel signed a new **bilateral investment agreement** to strengthen investor protection, enhance trade flows, and provide certainty to businesses. The pact includes **safeguards against expropriation, arbitration-based dispute settlement, and compensation provisions**.



##### Trade and Economic Significance

- India's exports to Israel (FY25): **\$2.15 billion**, including pearls, engineering goods, rice, electronics, cotton, ceramics, and telecom instruments.
- Imports from Israel: **\$1.61 billion**, mainly semi-precious stones, fertilizers, electronic components, agro-chemicals, and engineering goods.
- Current bilateral investment stands at around **\$800 million**, with the pact expected to increase business interaction and capital flows.

##### Strategic Cooperation Areas

- The agreement emphasizes collaboration in **fintech, infrastructure development, financial regulation, and digital payment connectivity**.
- Both nations also reaffirmed cooperation in innovation-driven sectors, aligning with India's **Atmanirbhar Bharat** and Israel's technology strengths.

##### Security and Political Context

- Both India and Israel face **common threats of terrorism**, and the pact was signed amidst ongoing security challenges.
- Leaders emphasized **civilizational values** and **shared democratic ethos**, reinforcing the partnership beyond economics.

##### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51(c) of the Indian Constitution:** Promotes international peace and security, encouraging respect for international treaties and obligations.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Provides the legal basis for trade policy and agreements.



- **Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996:** Provides a framework for dispute resolution in line with international norms.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

- The India–Israel investment pact is a **strategic step to attract FDI, expand trade, and secure investor confidence**. It complements India’s economic reforms while deepening ties with a key strategic partner in West Asia.
- It also reflects the linkage between **economic diplomacy and security cooperation**, especially in a volatile geopolitical environment.
- **UPSC Relevance:** Important for **GS Paper 2 (International Relations, Bilateral Agreements, India–West Asia relations)** and **GS Paper 3 (Economy, Trade, Investment, FDI policies)**. Can also be connected to **Essay topics on economic diplomacy, globalization, and security–development nexus**.

## 5. Government Exploring Alternative Export Markets

- **Context:** The Government of India is working on strategies to **shield farmers from adverse impacts of US tariffs** by diversifying export destinations and promoting import substitution.
- According to the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), measures are being developed to ensure farmers are not disproportionately affected by external trade shocks.

### Importance of Agricultural Exports

- India is a major exporter of **rice, spices, cotton, sugar, marine products, and horticultural goods**, which provide significant rural employment and foreign exchange.
- Tariff barriers by large economies like the US directly impact **farm incomes and rural stability**, making export diversification essential.

### Alternative Market Strategy

- The government is exploring **new export destinations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America**, reducing overdependence on traditional markets like the US and EU.
- Import substitution policies aim to reduce reliance on agricultural imports by encouraging domestic production in crops like **oilseeds, pulses, and horticulture**.



### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 39(b) of the DPSPs:** Ensures equitable distribution of resources to serve the common good, relevant for protecting farmers’ interests.
- **Article 48:** Directs the State to modernize agriculture and animal husbandry.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Provides the framework for regulating agricultural trade policies.
- **Agricultural Export Policy, 2018:** Aims to double farmers’ income by expanding export opportunities.



### Broader Significance

- Diversifying markets protects farmers from **global price volatility and trade wars**, ensuring **stable income support**.
- Strengthens India's position in **South–South cooperation** and emerging market linkages.
- Aligns with **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan**, which emphasizes resilience in food and agricultural systems.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

- Exploring alternative markets is not just a trade measure but also a **farmer welfare strategy**, linking agriculture with global geopolitics and economic diplomacy.
- It enhances **India's bargaining power in trade negotiations** and strengthens food security.
- **UPSC Relevance:** Important for **GS Paper 3 (Agriculture, Economy, External Trade)** and **GS Paper 2 (Government Policies, International Relations, WTO & Trade Issues)**. It may also feature in **Essay topics** on globalization, rural economy, and farmer resilience.

## 6. India's Refiners and Russian Oil Imports

- **Context:** Indian state-owned refiners are aiming to **restore full-scale imports of discounted Russian crude oil**, despite **US pressure to reduce such purchases**. However, supplies have declined due to Russia diverting cargoes to China.
- This reflects India's strategy of balancing **energy security needs with geopolitical pressures**.

### Importance of Russian Crude for India

- Russia became one of India's **top oil suppliers** after Western sanctions on Moscow, offering crude at **discounted rates**.
- India, the world's **third-largest oil consumer and importer**, relies on imports for over **85% of its crude requirements**, making discounted Russian oil vital for managing **inflation and current account deficit**.

### Geopolitical Dimensions

- The US has repeatedly urged India to **cut dependence on Russian crude** as part of its sanctions strategy following the Russia-Ukraine war.
- India has maintained a **neutral stance**, citing its right to pursue national energy security.
- This reflects India's **strategic autonomy** in foreign policy, avoiding alignment with Western or Russian blocs.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 38 (DPSP):** Directs the State to promote social and economic welfare, relevant in ensuring affordable energy for citizens.
- **Article 39(b):** Equitable distribution of material resources, including energy.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Empowers government to regulate petroleum products in public interest.



- **Petroleum & Natural Gas Regulatory Board Act, 2006:** Provides framework for energy regulation.

### Economic Significance

- Discounted oil from Russia helps India manage its **energy import bill**, keeping domestic fuel prices relatively stable.
- It aids in **controlling inflation**, supporting industrial growth, and ensuring **energy security**.
- However, reduced Russian supplies could push India towards **West Asian or African suppliers** at higher costs.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

- India's attempt to restore Russian crude imports highlights the **tension between energy security, foreign policy autonomy, and global geopolitics**.
- The issue showcases India's **realist approach in international relations**—prioritizing economic and energy needs over external pressure.
- **UPSC Relevance:** Important for **GS Paper 2 (International Relations, India's Foreign Policy)** and **GS Paper 3 (Energy Security, Economy, External Sector)**. Can also be linked to **Essay topics** on globalization, energy geopolitics, and India's strategic autonomy.

## 7. Supreme Court Takes Over Online Money Gaming Law Cases

- **Context:** The Supreme Court has transferred to itself all petitions challenging the constitutionality of the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Act, 2025**, which bans online money-based games. These cases were earlier pending before the High Courts of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, and Delhi.
- **Bench Decision:** Justices J.B. Pardiwala and K.V. Viswanathan allowed the Centre's plea to **club and centralize hearings** to avoid conflicting judgments and ensure judicial efficiency.

### Key Provisions of the Act

- Prohibits **all online games involving monetary stakes**.
- Empowers the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** to establish an authority for regulating **e-sports and casual games** without monetary transactions.
- Provides a **regulatory framework** to curb illegal betting and safeguard consumers, while promoting **skill-based gaming without financial risks**.



### Constitutional & Legal Dimensions

- **Article 246 & 7th Schedule:** "Betting and gambling" is a State subject, but online gaming involves **IT, trade, commerce, and taxation**, creating overlap between Union and State powers.
- **Article 19(1)(g):** Companies may argue the law restricts their right to practice trade/business. Restrictions must be **reasonable under Article 19(6)**.



- **Article 21:** Petitioners may contend that banning online games violates the right to personal liberty and freedom of choice.
- **Judicial Precedents:** Past rulings (e.g., *K.R. Lakshmanan vs. State of Tamil Nadu, 1996*) have distinguished between **games of skill and games of chance**, with skill-based games enjoying greater legal protection.

### Economic & Social Implications

- The online gaming industry in India has rapidly expanded, contributing to **employment, digital innovation, and FDI inflows**.
- However, money-based gaming has raised concerns of **addiction, financial losses, and youth exploitation**.
- The law seeks to strike a balance by **banning money games** while promoting **safe and regulated e-sports**.

### Government's Stand

- The Centre argues that consolidating cases before the Supreme Court ensures **uniformity of interpretation**.
- Solicitor General highlighted the urgency, as the law was **passed and notified within five days** in August 2025, reflecting policy priority.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

- The SC's decision to centralize hearings underscores the importance of **judicial consistency in constitutional matters**, particularly where **federal powers, economic regulation, and individual freedoms intersect**.
- The case will be a **landmark in defining the scope of regulation for digital economies**, balancing innovation with social safeguards.
- **UPSC Relevance:**
  - **GS Paper 2:** Constitutional provisions, federalism, judicial review.
  - **GS Paper 3:** Digital economy, regulatory frameworks, emerging technologies.
  - **Essay/Interview:** Ethical, legal, and social dilemmas of online gaming, regulation vs. freedom of choice.

## 8. Empowering RBI's e-Rupee: Starting with GST Collection

- **Introduction to e-Rupee (CBDC):** The **Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)**, known as the e-rupee, is a digital version of sovereign currency issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). Unlike UPI, which only facilitates bank-to-bank transfers, the e-rupee functions as **legal tender** stored in digital wallets and can operate independently of traditional banking channels.
- **Benefits for Financial Inclusion:**
  - Facilitates remittances for India's large **migrant population**, especially in remote areas lacking adequate banking infrastructure.



- Government welfare transfers through CBDC wallets can bypass middlemen, ensuring **direct benefit transfers (DBT)** with reduced leakages.
- Eliminates dependency on cash dispensers and mitigates risks of cash shortages.
- **GST Collection and Tax Compliance:**
  - Traceability through blockchain-based CBDC can help curb **input tax credit fraud**, estimated at ₹1.8 trillion over five years.
  - Mandatory GST payments via e-rupee would ensure **end-to-end digital records of goods movement, tax paid, and consignee details**, reducing the need for e-way bills and physical inspections.
  - CBDC's programmable features could simplify tax compliance by automating flows.
- **Cross-Border Transactions and Global Integration:**
  - India, being the **largest recipient of global remittances**, could benefit from faster, secure, and cost-effective transfers using e-rupee wallets.
  - Reduces reliance on the **US dollar** as the global anchor by enabling direct spot conversions and potential integration with future **stablecoins or multi-currency blockchains**.
- **Constitutional & Legal Framework:**
  - **RBI's Authority:** Under the **RBI Act, 1934** and **Section 22**, RBI has the sole right to issue currency, now extended to CBDC.
  - **Article 246 & Union List (Entry 36 & 46):** Provides Parliament power over currency, coinage, and foreign exchange.
  - **Article 265:** "No tax shall be levied or collected except by authority of law" – CBDC-led GST payments enhance compliance with this constitutional mandate.
  - **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Governs digital transactions, ensuring security and legal validity of e-payments.
- **Challenges and Concerns:**
  - **Privacy:** CBDC transactions are traceable on blockchain, raising concerns of state overreach.
  - **Adoption vs UPI:** UPI is widely entrenched with 700+ million daily transactions, making CBDC adoption challenging unless backed by strong incentives.
  - **Banking Sector Implications:** Widespread CBDC use may impact banks' deposit base, requiring careful calibration.



## Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The e-rupee has the potential to **revolutionize financial inclusion, taxation, and cross-border payments** while enhancing India's digital sovereignty. Its use in **GST collection** could be the first major step in ensuring transparency, compliance, and fraud reduction. However, concerns of privacy, adoption challenges, and systemic risks must be carefully addressed.

### UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 2:** Governance, e-governance, financial inclusion, constitutional provisions on taxation.





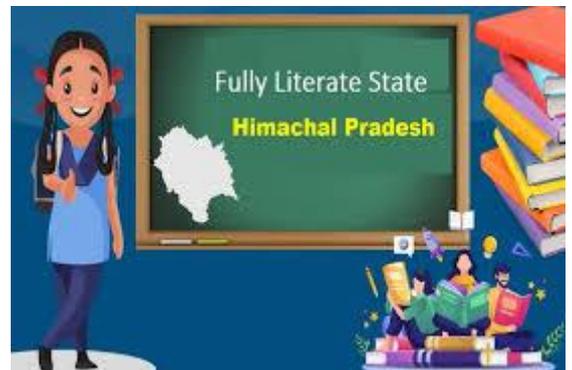
The SC's order ensures a **balance between accessibility and integrity in the electoral process**, preventing disenfranchisement while safeguarding constitutional requirements of citizenship. Aadhaar's inclusion as an **identity document, not citizenship proof**, strengthens electoral inclusion in a legally consistent manner.

**UPSC Relevance:**

- **GS Paper 2:** Electoral reforms, Representation of People Act, constitutional provisions on voting rights.
- **GS Paper 3:** Digital governance, Aadhaar usage, privacy concerns.
- **Essay/Interview:** Balancing **inclusivity vs. authenticity** in democratic processes; technology in electoral reforms.

## 10. Himachal Pradesh Declared a Fully Literate State

- **Context:** On International Literacy Day (September 8, 2025), Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu declared **Himachal Pradesh as a fully literate State**. The announcement was made in Shimla at an event organized by the Directorate of School Education.
- **Achievement:** Himachal Pradesh has progressed from a **minimal literacy rate of around 7% at the time of independence** to now achieving complete literacy. This milestone was reached **ahead of the scheduled timeline**, making Himachal a model for other states.
- **Continuous Reforms:** The CM emphasized that the journey was marked by **consistent reforms in school education**, aligning with **modern-day requirements** such as digital education, teacher training, and infrastructure development.
- **Key Constitutional and Legal Provisions:**
  - **Article 21A:** Guarantees the Right to Education (RTE) for children aged 6 to 14 years.
  - **Directive Principles (Article 45):** Mandates the State to provide free and compulsory education to children.
  - **RTE Act, 2009:** Provides legal backing to compulsory elementary education.
  - Literacy drives are also linked to **UN SDG-4 (Quality Education)**, which aims for inclusive and equitable education for all.
- **Definition of Literacy:** As per the **Census of India**, a person aged **7 years and above who can both read and write with understanding in any language** is considered literate. Functional literacy further implies the ability to apply these skills in daily life.
- **Significance:** Literacy is the foundation for **human development, social empowerment, and economic progress**. Himachal's achievement will boost its **Human Development Index (HDI)**, increase employability, and strengthen democratic participation.



### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Himachal Pradesh becoming a **fully literate state** is a landmark achievement in India's educational journey, showcasing how consistent reforms, strong political will, and community participation can transform social indicators. It reflects India's progress toward **SDG-4 and constitutional mandates on education**, setting an



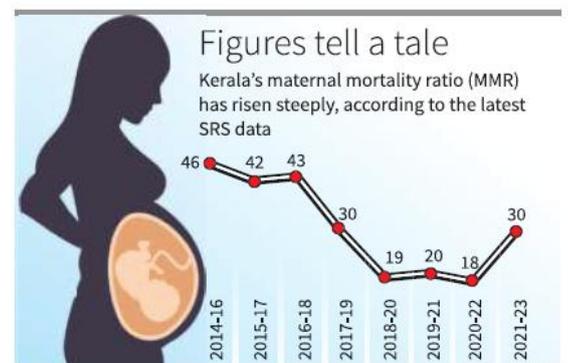
example for other states.

#### UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 2:** Education, Human Resource Development, RTE Act, social justice.
- **GS Paper 1:** Social empowerment, literacy as a key social indicator.
- **Essay/Interview:** Role of literacy in nation-building, Himachal model for inclusive development.

## 11. Rising Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in Kerala

- **Current Trend:** Kerala's Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) has risen from **18 to 30 per one lakh live births** as per the Sample Registration System (SRS) 2021–2023 report. Despite the increase, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh remain the states with the **lowest MMR in India**. The rise is attributed partly to **COVID-19 related maternal deaths (97 in 2021)** and a **sharp decline in the number of live births**.
- **Declining Live Births:** Kerala earlier recorded **5–5.5 lakh live births annually**, but the figure has now dropped below **4 lakh**. In 2023, the State reported **3.93 lakh live births**, and projections for 2024–25 suggest it may fall further to around **3.54 lakh**. The **steady maternal deaths (120–140 annually)** combined with a declining denominator (live births) have led to a higher ratio.
- **Data Discrepancy:** There is often a **difference between SRS figures (sample-based) and State Health Department data (line-list based)**. While SRS is used in official documents, the State's own monitoring is considered more accurate. In 2021–22, Kerala's MMR spiked to **51** due to **220 maternal deaths caused by COVID-19**.
- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions:**
  - **Article 21 (Right to Life):** Includes the right to health and safe motherhood.
  - **Directive Principles (Article 47):** Duty of the State to improve public health.
  - **National Health Mission (NHM) and Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY)** aim to reduce maternal mortality.
  - **SDG 3.1:** Target to reduce global MMR to less than 70 per 1,00,000 live births by 2030.



#### Definition:

- **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)** = (Number of maternal deaths ÷ Number of live births) × 1,00,000.
  - **Maternal Death:** Death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the pregnancy's duration, from any cause related to or aggravated by pregnancy or its management.
- **Policy Challenge:** Kerala's progress in maternal health is recognized, but **further reductions are difficult due to changing social and health profiles** (such as late pregnancies, lifestyle diseases, and low fertility rates). The focus now shifts to **last-mile reduction strategies** like high-risk pregnancy management, better obstetric care, and strengthening referral systems.



## Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Kerala's rising MMR highlights the **statistical challenge of declining live births** and the **complexities of maternal health management** in low-fertility states. While Kerala continues to be a leader in healthcare outcomes, the data suggests that policy focus should now move toward **quality maternal care, high-risk pregnancy monitoring, and aligning state figures with national statistical systems.**

### UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 2:** Issues relating to health, government schemes, SDGs.
- **GS Paper 1:** Demographic changes and social profile shifts.
- **Essay/Interview:** Safe motherhood, health indicators, Kerala model of healthcare vs national data discrepancies.

## 12. Ancient Civilisations and New Horizons: India–Iran Partnership

- **Global Context and Shifting Order:** The world is experiencing a transition from a U.S.-dominated order to a multipolar system. Challenges include violations of international law, trade wars, manipulation of media, and environmental degradation. The **Global South** is asserting independence by developing indigenous models, technology, and security frameworks.
- **Civilisational Linkages:** India and Iran, among the world's oldest civilisations, have historically shaped global culture, governance, philosophy, and art. Both emphasised peace, spirituality, respect for diversity, and resilience in the face of aggression. Their civilisational continuity gives them a unique moral authority in today's fractured global order.
- **Shared Historical and Modern Struggles:**
  - **India:** Anti-colonial struggle and leadership in the Non-Aligned Movement upheld sovereignty of the Global South.
  - **Iran:** Nationalisation of oil industry and the Islamic Revolution resisted Western domination.
  - Both nations faced **economic sanctions, external pressures, and political isolation**, yet maintained strategic independence and civilisational identity.
- **Contemporary Cooperation and Strategic Opportunities:**
  - Platforms like **BRICS** offer an alternative to Western financial dominance, supporting de-dollarisation and democratic global governance.
  - The **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** serves as a “civilisational bridge,” connecting Eurasia, West Asia, Africa, and India.
  - South-South cooperation, rooted in moral and cultural values, can guide a more just global order.
- **Palestine and Global South Solidarity:** The **Palestine issue** is viewed as the frontline of resistance against Western supremacy. Iran's stance on Palestine and nuclear energy represents the broader Global South's right to sovereignty, peaceful development, and self-determination. India's traditional support for Palestinian rights underlines its alignment with principles of justice in international relations.





- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions Relevant for India:**
  - **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Directs the State to promote international peace, security, and respect for international law.
  - **Panchsheel Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (1954):** Basis for India's independent foreign policy.
  - **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM):** India's legacy in strengthening the Global South against hegemonism.
- **Key Definitions:**
  - **Global South:** A term for developing nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America striving for equality in the international system.
  - **South-South Cooperation:** Collaborative exchange of resources, knowledge, and strategies among developing nations.
  - **Civilisational Diplomacy:** Foreign policy approach leveraging cultural, spiritual, and historical traditions to foster cooperation.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

India and Iran, as ancient civilisations with modern strategic independence, represent an alternative vision for the **Global South**—a world order rooted in equality, justice, and human dignity rather than domination. Strengthening platforms like **BRICS and INSTC** can help reshape geopolitics in favour of participatory multilateralism.

#### UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 2 (IR):** India–Iran relations, BRICS, South-South cooperation, Palestine issue.
- **GS Paper 1 (Culture & History):** Role of ancient civilisations in shaping global values.
- **Essay/Interview:** Multipolar world order, Global South solidarity, civilisational diplomacy.

## 13. Disproportionately High Cost of Private Kindergarten Education

- **Survey Findings and Cost Disparity:** The **Comprehensive Modular Survey: Education 2025** highlights that the expenditure gap between private and government schools is widest at the pre-primary (kindergarten) level. In rural areas, private kindergarten costs ₹17,988 annually on average (22 times government costs), and in urban areas ₹26,188 (16 times government costs). The gap narrows significantly in higher classes.
- **Front-Loading of Costs in Private Schools:** Within private schooling, expenditure rises only marginally across levels — from kindergarten to higher secondary, costs nearly double. In contrast, government school costs rise almost nine-fold in rural areas. This suggests “**front-loading**” of expenses by private schools, making entry-level education disproportionately expensive.
- **Regional Disparities:** State-level data reveals extreme cost multiples. In **urban Karnataka**, private kindergarten costs are 72 times higher than government schools. In rural **Chhattisgarh**, the gap is over 100 times. Gujarat and Karnataka appear in both rural and urban lists, indicating systemic overpricing in certain regions.
- **Equity and Access Concerns:** Such disparities raise questions about **affordability, equity, and accessibility** in education. The burden falls heavily on low- and middle-income families. Since early



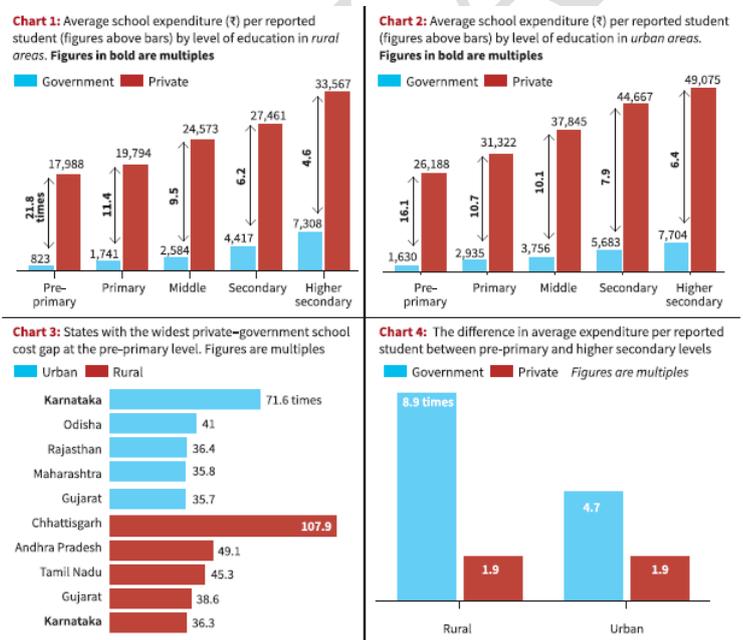
childhood education is critical for cognitive development, the economic barrier in private institutions deepens **educational inequality**.

• **Constitutional & Legal Provisions:**

- **Article 21A:** Guarantees the right to free and compulsory education for children aged 6–14 years, though pre-primary education is not covered.
- **Directive Principles (Article 45):** Directs the State to provide early childhood care and education for children below 6 years.
- **RTE Act, 2009:** Ensures free and compulsory education, but excludes pre-primary from its ambit, leaving a regulatory vacuum in early education costs.
- **NEP 2020:** Recognises the importance of **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)** and aims to universalise pre-primary schooling, highlighting the need for regulation of private costs.

• **Key Definitions:**

- **Front-loading of Costs:** The practice of charging disproportionately high fees at entry-level (e.g., kindergarten), while keeping subsequent fee hikes smaller.
- **ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education):** The holistic development of children below 6 years, involving health, nutrition, and foundational learning.



**Conclusion and UPSC Relevance**

The data underscores how **private kindergarten education is significantly overpriced compared to government schools**, with cost burdens highest at the entry stage. This creates barriers to **equitable access to foundational education**, despite constitutional directives. Strengthening **public pre-primary education** under NEP 2020 and regulating private fee structures are essential for achieving inclusive growth in education.

**UPSC Relevance:**

- **GS Paper 2 (Governance, Education Policy, Welfare Schemes):** RTE Act, NEP 2020, constitutional directives.
- **GS Paper 1 (Society):** Inequality in access to quality education.
- **Essay/Interview:** Education reforms, social justice, affordability of early education.

**14. India-China Border Settlement: Historical Overview and Current Status**

- **Vajpayee’s Initiatives and Early Engagements:** Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s 1979 visit to China as External Affairs Minister marked the first high-level engagement since the 1962 war. Although Deng Xiaoping offered a border deal, India deferred the decision. Vajpayee’s tenure saw



efforts to normalise relations and build peace along the **Line of Actual Control (LAC)** while expanding bilateral ties.

- **Nuclear Tests and Subsequent Diplomacy:** The 1998 Indian nuclear tests caused a diplomatic low, with China supporting **UN Security Council Resolution 1172**. Nevertheless, by 1999, both countries resumed dialogue through the **Joint Working Group (JWG)**, laying the groundwork for future border discussions.
- **Special Representatives and Political Parameters Agreement (2005):**
  - **Special Representatives (SRs)** were appointed — Brajesh Mishra for India and Dai Bingguo for China — to lead the boundary resolution process.
  - The **Political Parameters agreement** outlined principles for settlement: claims swapping (Aksai Chin for China, Arunachal Pradesh for India), recognition of natural geographical features as borders, consideration of strategic interests, and safeguarding settled populations.
  - Articles IV and VII emphasized **mutual security and protection of local populations**, indicating a likely “as is, where is” settlement.
- **Challenges and Delays:** Despite consensus on technical frameworks, China insisted on Tawang as part of any settlement, leading to prolonged stalemate. SRs continued to work, achieving an **18-point consensus** on the resolution framework, yet political approval and implementation remained pending. Key developments included **Doklam 2017**, Chumar 2014, and other border incidents, highlighting unresolved tensions.
- **Recent Developments (2024–2025):** Following PM Modi and President Xi Jinping’s 2024 BRICS summit meeting, the SRs resumed discussions to:
  - Develop a **mutually acceptable settlement framework** based on 2005 Political Parameters.
  - Establish a **special expert group** for early harvest agreements, starting with the **Sikkim-Tibet boundary**.
  - Introduce **new border management methods** to prevent incidents similar to 2020 standoffs.
- **Key Definitions:**
  - **Line of Actual Control (LAC):** The de facto border between India and China, which remains disputed in certain sectors.
  - **Special Representatives (SRs):** High-level officials appointed by both countries to negotiate and implement border settlement agreements.
  - **Early Harvest Agreement:** Initial segment of a larger settlement implemented quickly to build trust and reduce tensions.



## Conclusion and UPSC Relevance



The India-China boundary remains unresolved despite decades of dialogue and frameworks such as the 2005 Political Parameters agreement. Persistent disputes, military deployments, and political sensitivities highlight the complexity of bilateral relations. Effective settlement requires **political will, strategic patience, and incremental agreements** to ensure regional stability.

**UPSC Relevance:**

- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations):** India-China relations, border management, role of Special Representatives.
  - **GS Paper 3 (Security Challenges):** LAC disputes, Doklam, Chumar, early harvest agreements.
  - **Essay/Interview:** Strategic diplomacy, conflict resolution, regional security frameworks.
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