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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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1. US HIRE Bill and Its Implications for Indian IT Sector

- **Background of HIRE Bill (Halting International Relocation of Employment Act, 2025)**

Introduced by Senator Bernie Moreno in the US Senate, the bill proposes a **25% tax on payments made to foreign entities** rendering services to US individuals/companies. The revenue will go into a **Domestic Workforce Fund** to finance US apprenticeships and workforce development.

- **Impact on Indian IT Industry**

India's IT sector, worth **\$283 billion**, earns over **60% of its revenue from the US**. If implemented, the tax will:

- Increase billing rates to clients (to protect margins).
- Reduce competitiveness of Indian IT firms against local US companies.
- Pressure Fortune 500 companies to renegotiate contracts and cut costs.

- **Why US Companies Offshore Work?**

- **Lower cost of operations** compared to hiring US employees.
- **Shortage of niche tech skills** in the US (AI, cloud computing, cybersecurity).
- Heavy reliance on Indian engineers through **H-1B visas** (approx. 14,652 Indian IT employees in US as of June 2025).

- **Future Prospects & Challenges**

- The bill faces hurdles in passage through the House, Senate, and Presidential approval.
- Large US corporations are expected to **lobby against it**, as they rely on offshore and visa-based talent.
- If passed, negotiations will determine whether IT providers or US clients bear the tax burden.

- **Constitutional & Legal Angle**

- While this is US legislation, it may indirectly affect **India-US trade relations**, invoking WTO discussions on **non-discriminatory trade practices**.
- Under India's **Constitution (Article 19(1)(g))**, citizens have the right to practice any profession or trade, but such external policies may constrain India's service exports.
- **Definition:** *Outsourcing* refers to contracting work to an external organization (domestic or foreign) to reduce costs or access specialized expertise.

- **India's Strategic Concerns**

- Threat to **employment generation** and **foreign exchange earnings**.
- Possibility of India seeking **bilateral trade negotiations** or raising concerns under **India-US Trade Policy Forum**.
- Push for **domestic upskilling and AI-based automation** to reduce dependency on foreign policy uncertainties.





Conclusion

The HIRE Bill highlights rising **protectionist trends in the US** aimed at safeguarding domestic jobs. While its passage remains uncertain, it creates pressure on India's IT giants to diversify markets, enhance local hiring in the US, and invest in innovation to stay competitive.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-II:** India-US relations, WTO trade norms, protectionist policies.
- **GS-III:** Indian economy, impact on IT/exports, employment trends.
- **Essay/GS-IV:** Globalization vs Protectionism, Ethics in trade policies.

2. Rising Cost of Education and Dependence on Private Sector in India

Trends in Private vs Government Education

The **Comprehensive Modular Survey: Education (2025)** by NSO reveals that **51% of students are enrolled in private unaided schools**, with household spending up to **10–35 times higher** than in government schools. Rural students (\approx two-thirds) still depend on government schools, highlighting socio-economic disparities.

Private Coaching and Shadow Education

Private tuitions have become a parallel system of education. Around **25.5% of rural students and 30.7% of urban students** avail coaching, with figures rising to **40–45% at higher secondary levels**. Coaching adds significantly to costs—up to **one-third of total educational expenditure** at higher secondary levels.

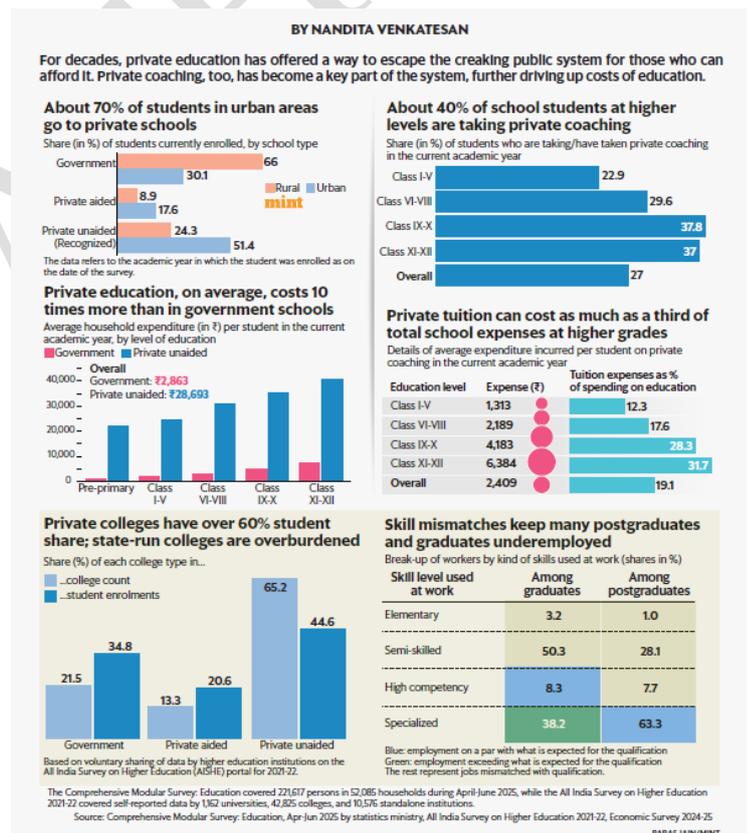
Higher Education Dynamics

Nearly **two-thirds of students in India pursue private colleges (aided/unaided)**. Government colleges, though only **21.5% of total institutions**, handle about **35% of enrolments**, creating overburdened systems. Despite high private spending, **skill mismatches persist**, with **37% postgraduates and 54% graduates underemployed** (Economic Survey 2024-25).

Structural Issues in Public Education

Challenges include **insufficient funding**, poor infrastructure, lack of qualified teachers, and weak accountability. These factors drive middle- and high-income households to private institutions, creating a **two-track education system** where quality is linked to affordability.

Policy, Constitutional & Legal Aspects





- **Directive Principles (Article 41 & 45):** Mandate free and compulsory education and promote educational opportunities.
- **Article 21A:** Provides the fundamental right to free and compulsory education (RTE Act, 2009 operationalizes this).
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** Stresses equitable, inclusive, and affordable education.
- Experts recommend **raising public expenditure on education from ~3% to 6% of GDP**, aligning with the **Kothari Commission (1966)** and NEP targets.
- **Definition of Key Terms**
 - **Shadow Education:** Informal private tutoring outside the formal schooling system.
 - **Underemployment:** A condition where individuals are employed in jobs below their skill, education, or qualification level.

Conclusion

The rising financial burden on Indian households for quality education underlines systemic weaknesses in the public education system. Unless **government investment in education increases significantly**, inequalities in access and outcomes will widen, undermining the vision of **Viksit Bharat 2047**.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-II:** Social sector schemes, RTE Act, NEP 2020, constitutional provisions on education.
- **GS-III:** Human resource development, employment challenges, inequality.
- **Essay/GS-IV:** Education as a tool for equity, ethics of affordability vs accessibility.

3. Mid-Term Review of Flagship Schemes by Finance Ministry

Background and Objectives

The Ministry of Finance will conduct a **mid-term review of flagship economic and welfare schemes** to redirect resources toward **employment generation, entrepreneurship, and skill development**. This recalibration is aimed at addressing **uneven consumption, sluggish private investment, and global economic uncertainties**, while building on earlier fiscal measures like **GST rate cuts and income tax relief**.

Key Schemes Under Review

- **MGNREGS:** Largest social safety net providing 100 days of guaranteed rural employment (FY26 allocation: ₹86,000 crore).
- **PM Vishwakarma (2023):** ₹5,100 crore for FY26, part of ₹13,000 crore five-year package to support artisans.
- **PM SVANidhi:** Loans to street vendors; allocation of ₹7,332 crore with extended lending till 2030.





- **PM-AASHA:** ₹35,000 crore outlay for price support to farmers (15th Finance Commission cycle).
- **PM-Kisan Maandhan:** Pension scheme for farmers.
- **PM Mudra Yojana & DAY-NRLM:** Micro-loans and skill development for small entrepreneurs.
- **Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme, 2025:** ₹1 trillion outlay, expected to create 35 million jobs by 2027.
- **Focus on SMEs and MSMEs**

SMEs and MSMEs, as key **drivers of job creation**, will be central to the review. With the impact of **US reciprocal tariffs** and global slowdown, MSME support through credit, skilling, and employment-linked incentives is likely to receive higher priority.
- **Fiscal and Policy Dimensions**

The review reflects a **counter-cyclical fiscal management strategy**, balancing immediate consumption needs with long-term productivity gains. Experts highlight its role in **adaptive governance** amidst global uncertainties, ensuring resource optimization and resilience-building.
- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions**
 - **Article 38 & 39 (DPSPs):** Promote social justice, equitable distribution of wealth, and livelihood security.
 - **Article 41:** Right to work, education, and public assistance.
 - **Article 43:** State's duty to promote cottage industries and workers' welfare.
 - **Legal Framework: MGNREG Act, 2005** provides a statutory right to work, making mid-term fund reviews significant for compliance with legal guarantees.
- **Definition of Key Terms**
 - **Counter-Cyclical Fiscal Policy:** Government intervention through higher spending or tax relief during economic slowdown to stabilize growth.
 - **Employment-Linked Incentives (ELI):** Targeted subsidies/incentives tied directly to job creation outcomes.

Conclusion

The mid-term review reflects India's shift from **broad stimulus to targeted employment generation and skill development**, seeking to balance **short-term consumption support with long-term productivity growth**. It aims to strengthen livelihoods, empower MSMEs, and harness the **demographic dividend**, thereby ensuring sustainable and inclusive growth.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-II:** Government policies, social sector schemes, welfare programmes.
- **GS-III:** Indian economy, employment generation, counter-cyclical fiscal policies.
- **Essay/GS-IV:** Role of state in inclusive growth, ethical responsibility in welfare distribution.



4. India Under WTO Scrutiny on Farm Trade and Subsidies

- **Background and Pending Queries**

India faces the **highest number of unanswered farm trade-related queries at the WTO**, with **186 pending since 2013** and **30 more in 2024**. Queries raised primarily by the US, Canada, Australia, and the EU focus on India's **MSP procurement, public stockholding, export subsidies (sugar, cotton), and overdue notifications** under the **WTO Agreement on Agriculture (AoA)**.

- **India's Position**

India asserts that its farm support programmes—including **Minimum Support Price (MSP), Public Distribution System (PDS), and input subsidies**—are essential to ensure **food security** and protect **small and marginal farmers**. The government spent **₹1.5 trillion in FY25** on food and farm subsidies under schemes like **PMGKAY** and **National Food Security Act (NFSA)**. India argues these measures are **WTO-compliant** and aligned with its developmental needs.

- **Concerns from Developed Nations**

Developed members (US, EU, Canada, Australia) view India's **delayed responses** as undermining **transparency** and eroding trust in the multilateral trading system. They fear India's procurement and stockholding distort global farm trade by **artificially supporting exports** and **affecting market prices**.

- **India's Counter-Arguments**

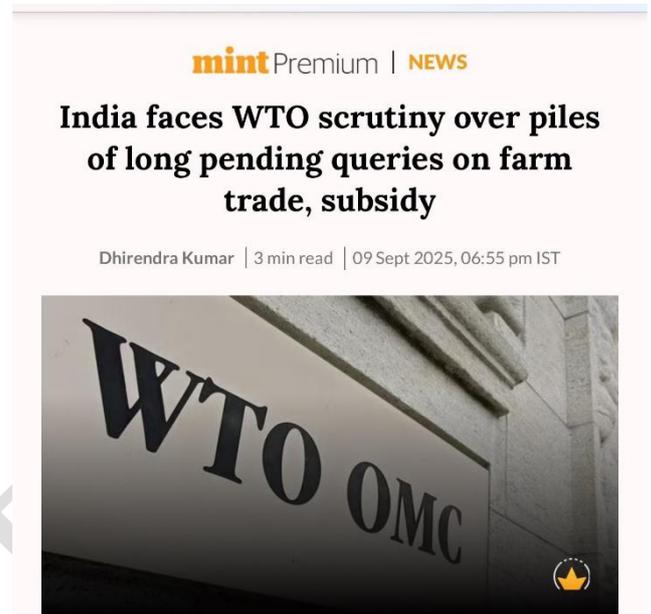
India highlights **asymmetry in global trade rules**, pointing to the **large, opaque subsidy programmes in developed economies** (e.g., US farm bills, EU Common Agricultural Policy) which distort trade more than developing-country schemes. India has itself sought clarifications from developed members on **dairy, sugar, and farm support measures**, signaling reciprocity in scrutiny.

- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions**

- **Article 39(b) & (c):** Directive Principles mandate equitable distribution of resources and prevention of wealth concentration.
- **Article 47:** Duty of the state to raise nutrition and living standards, linked to food security.
- **National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA):** Provides a legal right to subsidized food grains.
- **WTO AoA (1995):** Classifies subsidies as Green Box (non-trade-distorting), Amber Box (trade-distorting, with limits), and Special & Differential Treatment for developing nations.

- **Definition of Key Terms**

- **Public Stockholding (PSH):** Government procurement and storage of food grains to stabilize prices and ensure food distribution.
- **Amber Box Subsidies:** WTO term for trade-distorting support (e.g., MSP linked to production).





- **Peace Clause (Bali, 2013):** Temporary protection for developing nations' PSH programmes from WTO challenges, if for food security.

Conclusion

India's farm policies reflect a **developmental imperative to ensure food security for 800 million people and safeguard farmers' incomes**. While developed nations accuse India of non-transparency, the real contest lies in balancing **global trade rules with domestic food security needs**. Greater **diplomatic engagement and timely responses** could help India avoid a credibility gap at the WTO without diluting its stance on farmer protection.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-II:** WTO, multilateral institutions, India's food security policies.
- **GS-III:** Agriculture subsidies, MSP, PDS, global trade impacts.
- **Essay/GS-IV:** Equity vs efficiency in global trade, ethics of subsidies and food security.

5. Retail Inflation Trends in August 2025

• Current Inflation Outlook

Retail inflation (CPI) for August 2025 is expected to rise modestly to **2.2% (from 1.6% in July)**, remaining well below RBI's medium-term target of 4%. Economists project CPI inflation in the range of **1.7%–2.5%**, driven by slight increases in **tomato and onion prices**, though subdued food inflation continues to keep headline inflation low.

• Role of Food Prices

Food accounts for nearly **40% of the CPI basket**. Recent inflation moderation was aided by deflation in vegetables, pulses, and spices during June–July. However, **heavy rains and floods** pose risks to crop output, potentially pushing prices higher. Seasonal volatility in food remains a key risk factor for future inflation.

• Impact of GST Rate Cuts

Recent **GST reductions** are expected to ease consumer prices. Economists estimate that full passthrough could reduce CPI by **up to 100 basis points**, with the impact visible more clearly in **October onwards**. This aligns with the government's objective of boosting consumption through indirect tax relief.

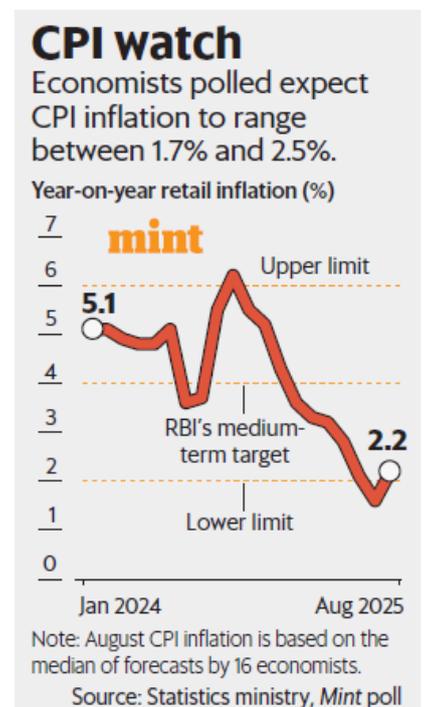
• Monetary Policy Dimension

The RBI had earlier projected inflation breaching the 4% target in Q4 of FY26. With the new GST cuts, projections may be revised downward. However, despite moderate inflation, RBI is unlikely to implement fresh **repo rate cuts**, given:

- The frontloaded rate cuts in June 2025.
- Strong GDP growth of **7.8% in April–June 2025**.

• Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 38 & 39 (DPSPs):** Oblige the State to ensure equitable distribution of resources and protect people's welfare.



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- **RBI Act, 1934 (Amended 2016):** Mandates an inflation-targeting regime through the **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** with a target of **4% CPI inflation $\pm 2\%$** .
- **Definition:** *Retail Inflation (CPI)* measures changes in consumer prices of goods and services; it directly reflects the cost of living.

Conclusion

India's retail inflation remains **comfortably low**, supported by stable food prices and GST rate cuts. However, risks from **climate shocks (floods, heavy rains)** underline the vulnerability of inflation to food supply disruptions. RBI's cautious monetary stance reflects the need to balance **growth momentum with inflation stability**, keeping inflation within the mandated **2–6% band**.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-III (Economy):** Inflation trends, RBI's inflation targeting framework, GST impact on macroeconomy.
- **GS-II (Governance):** Role of state policies in ensuring price stability and welfare.
- **Essay/GS-IV:** Food inflation and equity, balancing growth with stability.

6. Nepal's Political Turmoil and India's Trade Concerns

• Current Situation

Nepal is facing political turmoil following mass protests over a ban on 26 social media platforms, leading to **19 deaths and over 300 injuries**, and resignations of Prime Minister K.P. Sharma Oli and Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak. India is cautiously monitoring the situation, as prolonged instability could impact trade and supply chains.

• India–Nepal Trade Dependence

India is Nepal's largest trading partner. In **FY25**, **India exported goods worth \$7.32 billion** to Nepal, while imports stood at **\$1.2 billion**, generating a substantial trade surplus. India's key exports include **petroleum products, vehicles, machinery, electrical equipment, pharmaceuticals, and food items**. Nepal relies heavily on India for essential supplies.



• Logistical Concerns

Almost all trade is conducted via **road routes** due to Nepal's landlocked geography. The **Raxaul-Birgunj crossing** is the busiest trade point, handling petroleum, food, and industrial inputs. Past unrest has caused bottlenecks at **Raxaul-Birgunj and Sunauli-Bhairahawa**. Rail and air links exist but are underutilized, making road disruptions a significant risk.

• Trade Risks from Instability

Delays at customs or transport routes could disrupt supplies of **perishables, medicines, and industrial inputs**. Experts caution that if unrest spreads beyond Kathmandu, **cross-border trade flows may be severely hampered**, affecting both Indian exporters and Nepali consumers.

• Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles, Part IV):** Calls for promotion of international peace and just relations with nations.



- **India–Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship (1950):** Provides for open borders and close economic ties.
- **Definition: Trade Surplus** – A situation where the value of a country’s exports exceeds its imports, as in India’s case with Nepal.

Conclusion

Nepal’s political instability poses risks to India’s **border trade, supply chains, and economic relations**. While immediate concerns are limited, any escalation may disrupt vital exports and imports. India’s cautious approach reflects a balance between **protecting trade interests** and maintaining **diplomatic sensitivity** with its neighbor.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-II (International Relations):** India–Nepal relations, impact of political turmoil on bilateral ties.
- **GS-III (Economy):** Trade disruptions, supply chain vulnerability, trade surplus implications.
- **Essay/GS-I:** Regional stability and its effect on India’s neighborhood policy.

7. India’s Push for Universal Digital Immunization

• Technology-Driven Vaccination Plan

India has set **1 April 2026** as the deadline for nationwide rollout of the **U-WIN platform**, a digital version of the vaccination card. The platform will ensure **real-time tracking, monitoring, and follow-up** of immunization, plugging gaps in the **Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)**.

• Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)

Launched in 1985, the UIP provides **free vaccines against 12 preventable diseases** including tuberculosis (BCG), diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus (DPT), polio, and Hepatitis B. It is one of the **largest public health programmes globally**, aiming to protect all children and pregnant women.

• U-WIN Features

Healthcare workers such as **Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs)** can generate due lists, record vaccinations, and track missed doses. The digital system will help reduce **dropouts, delays, and zero-dose cases** (children who have not received any vaccines), thereby improving overall coverage and follow-up.



• Challenges Identified

High-burden states like **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, and Northeastern states (Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram)** require special focus. Gaps remain in **access, awareness, and monitoring**, particularly in rural and underserved regions.

• Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Right to life includes the right to health.
- **Directive Principles (Article 47):** Duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and standard of public health.



- **National Health Policy 2017:** Aims to strengthen immunization as part of universal health coverage.
- **Definition: Zero-Dose Children** – children who have not received a single routine vaccine dose under the immunization programme.

Conclusion

India's push for a **digitized immunization ecosystem** through U-WIN reflects its commitment to **“Health for All”**. By integrating technology into public health delivery, the government seeks to minimize vaccine dropouts, improve maternal and child health, and strengthen healthcare equity, especially in vulnerable states.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-II (Governance & Social Justice):** Health policy, government schemes, use of digital technology in welfare delivery.
- **GS-III (Science & Tech, Economy):** Application of IT in healthcare, public health challenges.
- **Essay/GS-IV (Ethics):** Equity in healthcare access, state's duty towards vulnerable populations.

8. Government Allows MRP Revision Post-GST Cuts

● Policy Update

The government has permitted **manufacturers, packers, and importers** of pre-packaged goods to **revise the Maximum Retail Price (MRP)** on unsold stock after changes in **Goods and Services Tax (GST) rates**. This move ensures smoother business transition and prevents consumer-market distortions.

● Definition: Maximum Retail Price (MRP)

MRP is the **highest price** that can be charged from a consumer for a product, inclusive of all taxes. Under the **Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules, 2011**, displaying MRP on pre-packaged goods is mandatory to ensure consumer protection.

● Legal & Constitutional Framework

- **Article 38 & 39(b):** Directive Principles obligate the State to ensure equitable distribution of resources and protect consumer interest.
- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019:** Safeguards consumers from unfair trade practices.
- **GST Act, 2017:** Provides uniform indirect taxation, and its rate changes directly impact retail pricing.

● Significance of the Move

- Prevents businesses from incurring **losses on old stock** due to revised GST rates.
- Helps ensure **accurate pass-through of tax benefits** to consumers.
- Avoids black marketing, dual pricing, and market confusion during tax transitions.





- **Challenges & Compliance**

Companies must ensure **timely relabeling, stickering, or stamping** of revised MRP under supervision. Enforcement authorities under **Legal Metrology Act** must monitor compliance to protect consumers from arbitrary pricing.

Conclusion

By allowing MRP revisions on unsold stock after GST rate cuts, the government balances **business ease and consumer rights**. It aligns with principles of **transparency, fair trade practices, and consumer welfare**, strengthening trust in India's taxation and market system.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-II (Governance & Social Justice):** Consumer protection, legal provisions for welfare.
- **GS-III (Economy):** GST reforms, market regulation, ease of doing business.
- **Essay/GS-IV (Ethics):** Balancing interests of producers and consumers, ethical pricing practices.

9. Election of CP Radhakrishnan as Vice-President of India

- **Election Outcome**

C.P. Radhakrishnan, NDA candidate and Maharashtra Governor, was elected the **17th Vice-President of India** with **452 first-preference votes**, defeating Opposition nominee Justice B. Sudershan Reddy, who secured **300 votes**. Out of **781 eligible electors**, **767 MPs voted**, with **15 invalid votes** and **14 abstentions**.

- **Electoral College & Procedure**

- **Constitutional Basis:** Article **66** of the Indian Constitution.
- **Electoral College:** Consists of members of both **Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha** (including nominated members).
- **Method:** **Proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote (STV)** and **secret ballot**.
- **Term:** 5 years (Article **67**).
- **Eligibility:** Same as President (Article **66(3)**) – must be a citizen of India, at least 35 years old, and eligible to be a Rajya Sabha member.



*C.P. Radhakrishnan
Appointed As New
Vice President of India*

- **Role of the Vice-President in India**

- **Ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha** (Article **64**).
- Steps in as **Acting President** in case of vacancy in the office of the President (Article **65**).
- The Vice-President does not have executive powers and mainly plays a **parliamentary role**, ensuring order in the Upper House.

- **Comparison with US Vice-President**

- **Similarities:**
 - Presiding officer of the Upper House (US Senate/Indian Rajya Sabha).
 - Successor to the President in case of vacancy.



- **Differences:**
 - US Vice-President is part of the **executive branch**, elected directly through **Electoral College** along with the President.
 - Holds **executive responsibilities** (e.g., member of the Cabinet, National Security Council).
 - Indian Vice-President has a **limited role**, confined mainly to the **legislature**.
- **Key Constitutional Provisions**
 - **Article 63:** There shall be a Vice-President of India.
 - **Article 64:** Vice-President as ex-officio Chairman of Rajya Sabha.
 - **Article 65:** To act as President in case of vacancy.
 - **Article 66:** Election procedure.
 - **Article 67:** Term and conditions.

Conclusion

The election of C.P. Radhakrishnan highlights the **political weight of cross-voting** in parliamentary elections and the importance of the Vice-President's role in maintaining the dignity and functioning of the Rajya Sabha. While largely ceremonial compared to the US system, the Indian Vice-President is a vital link between the **executive and legislature**, reinforcing parliamentary democracy.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-II (Polity & Governance):** Indian Constitution, offices of President & Vice-President, comparison with US political system.
- **Prelims:** Articles 63–67, electoral method (STV, proportional representation).
- **Mains (GS-II):** “Role of the Vice-President in Indian parliamentary democracy vis-à-vis the US model.”

10. Rajasthan Assembly Passes Anti-Conversion Bill, 2025

- **Key Features of the Bill**

The Rajasthan Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2025 introduces **life imprisonment**, fines up to **₹1 crore**, and confiscation/demolition of properties where mass conversions take place. Offenders' fines will be paid to victims, in addition to court-awarded compensation. Offences are **cognisable, non-bailable, and triable by sessions courts**. Conversions solely for marriage will be declared **void**.
- **Exemptions and Scope**

Returning to one's “ancestral religion” is exempted. The law targets conversions through **force, fraud, coercion, fear, or allurement**, but not voluntary conversion. Mass conversions and marriages solely intended for conversion are considered unlawful.
- **Historical & Judicial Context**
 - Attempts to pass such a law in Rajasthan were made in **2006 and 2008**, but stalled due to opposition and presidential concerns.



- The **Rajasthan High Court (2017)** mandated prior intimation to the District Magistrate and public display of intent for conversions.
- Similar anti-conversion laws already exist in states such as **UP, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Arunachal Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh.**
- **Constitutional Provisions Involved**
 - **Article 25:** Guarantees freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion, subject to public order, morality, and health.
 - **Reasonable Restrictions:** State can regulate/restrict conversions carried out by **force, fraud, or inducement.**
 - **Marriage & Conversion:** Linked to **Article 21 (Right to Life & Liberty)** and personal laws; courts have often intervened in cases of conversion for marriage.
- **Debate and Political Reactions**

The ruling BJP government claims the Bill will maintain **peace and harmony**. The Opposition Congress staged a **walkout**, calling it divisive and against communal harmony. Critics argue it may curb individual freedoms and be misused against minorities.



Conclusion

The Bill reflects the growing trend of **anti-conversion legislation across India**, aligning with concerns over religious freedom versus forced conversions. While it claims to safeguard vulnerable groups, it also raises debates on the **limits of Article 25** and potential misuse against genuine conversions or interfaith marriages. The balance between **religious liberty and public order** remains a contested constitutional space.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Key provisions of Article 25, features of Rajasthan's anti-conversion law, list of states with similar laws.
- **Mains (GS-II, Polity & Governance):** Debate on **freedom of religion vs. regulation of conversions**, judicial stance on anti-conversion laws, and implications for **communal harmony and individual rights**.
- **Essay/Ethics:** Role of state in regulating faith-based practices, balancing liberty with social harmony.

11. The Long March Ahead to Technological Independence

- **Need for Technological Sovereignty**

India celebrated its 79th Independence Day (2025), but true independence now requires **technological sovereignty** — the ability of a nation to control and develop its own digital, software, and hardware ecosystem. Modern conflicts are increasingly **cyber wars** involving control over **AI, cloud services, and digital infrastructure**, making external dependence a national vulnerability.
- **Current Challenges**

India has **no indigenous operating system, database, or foundational software**, making it reliant



on global corporations that can withdraw services under foreign directives. Dependence on imported **semiconductors and hardware components** also exposes India to global supply chain disruptions.

- **Pathways to Software Independence**

Open-source software offers a solution. India can develop customized, **secure versions of Linux and Android**, supported by long-term maintenance teams. Developing indigenous **client-side (database, email, calendar)** and **server-side (web server, cloud, email server)** components is essential. A sustainable, business-driven model, supported by IT professionals and community participation, is required rather than reliance solely on government funding.

- **Pathways to Hardware Sovereignty**

Hardware self-reliance, especially in **semiconductors**, requires huge national investment in **chip design, fabrication, and assembly**. India should initially focus on niche components and build expertise through **strategic global partnerships**. Over time, domestic capability in **semiconductor fabs** will be vital for comprehensive sovereignty.



- **Constitutional and Legal Provisions**

- **Article 21 (Right to Life):** Expands to digital security and privacy; foreign dependence on critical digital infrastructure may endanger these rights.
- **Article 19(1)(a) & 19(1)(g):** Freedom of expression and trade in the digital era requires secure, independent platforms.
- **National Cyber Security Policy (2013)** and **Digital India initiative** already highlight self-reliance in ICT, but deeper execution is needed.
- **Semiconductor Mission (2021)** and **PLI Schemes** are early steps toward hardware sovereignty.

- **Definitions**

- **Technological Sovereignty:** The ability of a nation to design, produce, and control its critical technologies without dependence on foreign powers.
- **Open Source Software:** Software whose source code is freely available for modification and distribution, reducing monopolistic control and enhancing transparency.

Conclusion

India's journey to **political independence** was through non-violence; its journey to **technological independence** must be through innovation, open-source collaboration, and strategic investment.

Dependence on foreign tech companies for critical infrastructure poses risks to sovereignty, economy, and security. Building indigenous digital ecosystems is no longer optional but a necessity.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Definitions of technological sovereignty, open-source software, National Cyber Security Policy, Semiconductor Mission.
- **Mains (GS-III):** Challenges of cyber security, need for indigenous technological capabilities, role of open-source, hardware vs. software sovereignty.



- **Essay/Ethics:** "True Independence in the Digital Age: Technological Sovereignty as National Security."

12. Indian Academia in Times of Genocide

- **Background and Petition**

In August 2025, over 500 scientists and academics, including Indians, petitioned the **International Olympiad on Astronomy and Astrophysics (IOAA)** in Mumbai to prevent Israel from participating as a national team, given its actions in Gaza. The IOAA board, an autonomous body with 120 members, approved the proposal with majority support, effective from 2026. Similar restrictions had earlier applied to Russia, Belarus, and Israel in other Olympiads.

- **Academic Rift in India**

The Israeli Embassy criticized the move, and around 300 Indian academics, including IIT directors and vice-chancellors, sought government action against petition signatories. However, the IOAA clarified that decisions were independent of host countries. This controversy highlighted deeper issues of **academic freedom, political neutrality of science, and ethical responsibility of intellectuals.**



- **Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza**

Since 2023, Israel's military campaign in Gaza has killed over **63,000 people**, with 83% identified as civilians. Over **90% of schools and 94% of hospitals** have been damaged, and UN reports confirm famine as a "man-made disaster." Studies in *The Lancet* projected that indirect deaths from food shortages and civic collapse could increase mortality to over **10% of Gaza's population.**

- **Historical Context**

The current crisis continues a historical trajectory dating back to the **Nakba (1948)**, when around 750,000 Palestinians were displaced. Figures such as **Albert Einstein** condemned atrocities like the **Deir Yassin massacre**. The ruling Likud Party, founded by Menachem Begin (linked to earlier militant groups), continues to shape Israeli policy. This historical continuity underscores long-standing disputes about land, identity, and rights.

- **Constitutional and Legal Aspects**

- **Article 19(1)(a):** Protects freedom of speech and academic freedom, though limited by reasonable restrictions.
- **Article 51:** Directs India to promote international peace and security, aligning with academics' solidarity efforts.
- **International Humanitarian Law (Geneva Conventions, 1949):** Prohibits targeting civilians, making accusations of genocide legally significant.
- **Academic Freedom:** Protected under democratic principles; coercive actions against dissenting academics may weaken India's **constitutional ethos** of liberty and justice.

- **Definition**



- **Genocide (UN Convention, 1948):** Acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. This includes killing members, causing serious harm, and inflicting conditions of life to destroy the group.

Conclusion

The debate over Israel's participation in IOAA reflects broader issues: the responsibility of academics in times of humanitarian crisis, tensions between political neutrality and ethical duty, and India's legacy of standing for anti-colonial struggles. While global science seeks neutrality, **moral choices often intersect with academic platforms**. For India, preserving **academic freedom and humanitarian solidarity** aligns with its constitutional values and international commitments.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** IOAA, UN Genocide Convention, Nakba, role of UN in humanitarian crises.
- **Mains (GS-II):** India's foreign policy and humanitarian principles, Article 51 and international peace, rights of minorities.
- **Mains (GS-IV):** Role of intellectuals in ethical decision-making, conflict between professional neutrality and moral responsibility.
- **Essay:** "Academic Freedom and Ethical Responsibility in Times of Global Crises."