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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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1. Have US Tariffs Begun Impacting India's Exports?

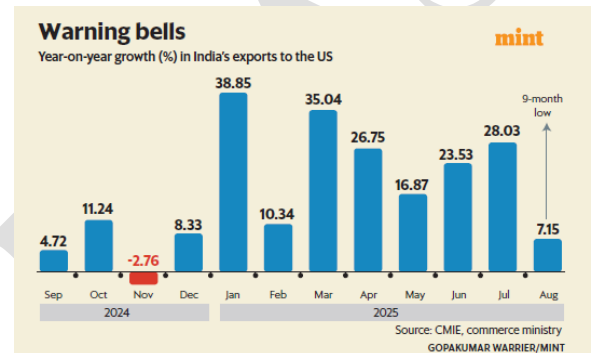
1. Recent Trade Data Highlights

- India's **merchandise exports** grew **6.7% year-on-year** to **\$35.1 billion in August 2025**.
- Growth partly reflects a **low base effect** (exports had contracted 14% in August 2024).
- Sequentially, exports fell **5.7% compared to July 2025**, indicating underlying weakness.
- Electronics (+25.9%) and Gems & Jewellery (+15.6%) boosted overall growth, but both sectors saw a **month-on-month decline**.

Definition – Merchandise Exports: Goods that are produced domestically and sold to foreign markets (as opposed to services exports like IT, tourism, etc.).

2. Impact on Exports to the US

- Exports to the US grew only **7.2% in August**, a **9-month low**, down from an average **25.6% growth during Jan–July 2025**.
- The US accounted for **19.6%** of India's exports in August, below the average 22.5%.
- Slowdown reflects **front-loading** of shipments before the tariff hike and visible impact of the **50% tariff imposed from late August 2025**.



3. Diversification of Export Markets

- India redirected some exports to the **UAE (+23.4% growth in August, share up to 9.6%)** and **Netherlands (+17.9% growth, share up to 5.2%)**.
- Indicates **partial diversification strategy**, but the US still remains India's **largest export destination**.

4. Sectoral Impact of Tariffs

- Labour-intensive sectors are worst affected:
 - Garments:** -2.7%
 - Carpets:** -7.2%
 - Jute:** -8.3%
- Gems & Jewellery (facing >50% tariff) managed to sustain growth in August, but risks persist.
- Vulnerability exists as **Vietnam and Bangladesh face lower tariffs (~20%)**, making them more competitive.

5. Likely Future Impact

- Economists warn that the **full 50% US tariff impact will hit from September 2025**, leading to a **material decline in exports**.
- This could **widen India's trade deficit** and put pressure on the **current account balance**.
- Sensitive sectors include **textiles, footwear, leather, and precious metals**.



Definition – Tariff: A tax imposed on imports or exports by a government, aimed at protecting domestic industries or generating revenue.

6. Constitutional & Legal Context

- **Article 301–307 (Part XIII, Indian Constitution):** Provide for **freedom of trade, commerce and intercourse** within India, but also empower Parliament to regulate foreign trade.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Empowers the central government to regulate imports/exports, impose restrictions, and promote trade.
- **WTO Agreements:** India can challenge discriminatory tariff hikes under WTO's dispute resolution framework.

Conclusion

The US tariffs are beginning to **dent India's export momentum**, particularly in **labour-intensive sectors**, while some relief comes from market diversification. However, with the **full 50% tariff impact looming**, India may face a significant **export slowdown and trade deficit expansion** in the coming months. Strategic **bilateral negotiations**, export incentive schemes, and diversification to **non-US markets** will be critical.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2:** India–US trade relations, WTO rules, foreign policy in trade.
- **GS Paper 3:** External sector, trade policy, impact on economy, balance of payments.
- **GS Paper 1:** Globalization and its impact on Indian economy.
- **Prelims:** Concepts of **tariffs, exports, trade deficit, WTO agreements**.
- **Essay Paper:** "Trade protectionism and its impact on emerging economies."

2. Disinflation Grips Asia: How is India Faring?

Key Highlights

- **Definition – Disinflation:** A sustained decline in the rate of inflation (prices rise at a slower pace, but not a fall in prices like *deflation*).
- **India's Position:** Inflation has cooled to the lower end of RBI's target band (2–6%) in 2025, after persistent price pressures since 2019. Wholesale Price Index (WPI) has even slipped into deflation for two months.
- **Regional Context:**
 - South Korea, Philippines, Malaysia – inflation below target.
 - China, Thailand – in outright *deflation*.
 - Factors: subdued oil & food prices, weak demand, and *China's economic slowdown exporting deflation globally*.
- **China's Role:**
 - Weak domestic demand and overcapacity → low-price exports.
 - China's Producer Price Index (PPI) in deflation since Sept 2022.



- Since China contributes ~30% of global manufacturing, its price crash is depressing global and Indian prices.
- **India's GST Reform:**
 - Major GST rate cuts from 22 Sept 2025 → expected downward pull on retail inflation by 0.3–1.3 percentage points.
 - Helps keep inflation subdued for at least a year, even amid food-price shocks due to floods.
- **Monetary Policy Outlook:**
 - RBI projects 4.4% inflation (Jan–Mar 2026).
 - RBI follows *one-year-ahead inflation targeting* under its legal mandate:
 - **Constitutional/Legal Provision:** RBI derives its inflation-targeting role from the **RBI Act, 1934** (amended in 2016 to establish *Monetary Policy Committee* under Sec. 45ZB–45ZL).
 - Target: 4% (+/–2%) set by Government of India in consultation with RBI (till March 2026).
 - A possible **US Fed rate cut** (25 bps expected in Sept 2025) may push RBI toward monetary easing, especially with India's inflation expected near 2.5% in 2025–26.

Conclusion

- India has entered a **disinflationary phase** aided by GST reforms, global commodity softness, and spillover from China's slowdown.
- However, risks remain from **food inflation shocks (floods, seasonal spikes)**.
- RBI is likely to adopt a cautious stance, balancing growth needs with inflation targeting, while global cues—especially from the US Fed—will heavily influence policy.

UPSC Relevance

- **Economy (GS Paper 3):** Monetary policy, inflation targeting, GST reforms, global spillovers.
- **International Economy:** Impact of China's slowdown on global/Indian inflation.
- **Prelims:** Concepts of disinflation vs. deflation, WPI vs. CPI, RBI's inflation-targeting framework.
- **Mains:** Essay/GS3 themes—"Global Interdependence of Economies," "Inflation Control and Growth Trade-offs."

3. Torrential Rain and Flash Floods in Dehradun

Key Highlights

- **Disaster Event:**
 - Heavy rainfall (192 mm in Sahastradhara, Dehradun) caused **flash floods** and swelling of rivers.
 - Resulted in collapse/wash away of houses, hotels, and infrastructure.
 - 13 people reported dead; 8 people swept away on a tractor.



- **Meteorological Warning:**

- **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** issued a *red alert* for Uttarakhand.
- A *red alert* indicates extremely heavy rainfall with potential for large-scale damage, requiring immediate response.

- **Administrative Response:**

- Uttarakhand Chief Minister directed officials to intensify **relief, rescue, and rehabilitation efforts**.
- Disaster management teams, SDRF, and NDRF likely to be deployed in such emergencies.

- **Key Concepts & Definitions:**

- **Flash Floods:** Sudden and intense flooding caused by heavy rainfall, rapid snowmelt, or dam break, usually in hilly terrain.
- **Red Alert (IMD):** The highest weather warning, signaling the need for emergency measures.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Provides for institutional framework (NDMA, SDMA, NDRF) for disaster preparedness, mitigation, and response.



- **Legal & Constitutional Provisions:**

- **Entry 23 of Concurrent List:** Social security and social insurance, including relief for the unemployed, the sick and the disabled, and in cases of “unforeseen calamities.”
- **Fundamental Duty (Art. 51A(g)):** Duty of citizens to protect the environment.
- **Directive Principles (Art. 48A):** Duty of State to protect and improve environment and safeguard forests and wildlife.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Establishes NDMA headed by PM; SDMA headed by CM for state-level disaster response.

- **Environmental Concerns:**

- Uttarakhand’s fragile Himalayan ecosystem is highly vulnerable to extreme weather events.
- Climate change is increasing the frequency and intensity of cloudbursts and flash floods in the region.

Conclusion

The Dehradun floods highlight the **growing vulnerability of Himalayan states** to climate-induced extreme weather events. Strengthening early warning systems, resilient infrastructure, sustainable tourism, and strict urban planning are critical to reduce future risks.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 1 (Geography):** Disaster-prone Himalayan regions, causes of floods and cloudbursts.
- **GS Paper 2 (Governance):** Role of central/state institutions in disaster management.



- **GS Paper 3 (Environment, Disaster Management):** Climate change, sustainable development, National Disaster Management Authority.
- **Prelims:** Disaster Management Act 2005, IMD warning system, concepts of cloudburst/flash flood.

4. India–US Trade Negotiations Resume

Key Highlights

- **Resumption of Talks:** India and the US have restarted discussions to finalize a **Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)** after a long pause. Both sides agreed to intensify efforts to quickly reach a **mutually beneficial trade deal**.
- **Tariff Dispute:**
 - US imposed an additional **25% punitive duty** on Indian exports linked to India's purchase of Russian oil, on top of the reciprocal 25% tariff → resulting in a **50% cumulative tariff**.
 - This has severely impacted India's **labour-intensive export sectors**: textiles, engineering goods, gems and jewellery, and agriculture.
- **Core Negotiation Issues:**
 - **India's priorities:** Relief from high US tariffs, improved **market access** for pharmaceuticals, seafood, and agricultural products.
 - **US concerns:** India's **Quality Control Orders (QCOs)** seen as non-tariff barriers; demand for opening sensitive areas like agriculture, dairy, e-commerce, and stronger IPR (patent) rules.
 - India has shown flexibility by offering tariff cuts on **95% of US industrial goods**, while protecting "red line" sectors tied to farmers' livelihoods and regulatory autonomy.
- **Political-Legal Context:**
 - US tariffs are legally tied to its domestic case before the **Supreme Court**, making withdrawal difficult in the short term.
 - Domestic sensitivities in India (700 million farmers) restrict compromise on agriculture and dairy.
- **Strategic Significance:**
 - Both leaders, PM Modi and President Trump, expressed confidence in reaching an early conclusion.
 - Trade talks are part of the broader **India–US strategic partnership**, complementing defense, technology, and energy cooperation.



Key Concepts & Legal Provisions

- **Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA):** A trade pact between two nations to reduce tariffs, remove barriers, and promote economic cooperation.



- **Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs):** Regulatory measures (e.g., QCOs, standards, licensing rules) that restrict imports without using tariffs.
- **Constitutional Provision:**
 - **Union List (Entry 41 & 83, Seventh Schedule):** Union Government has exclusive power over foreign trade and customs duties.
- **WTO Framework:** Both India and the US are WTO members; any BTA must align with WTO rules under **Article XXIV of GATT 1994** (regional/bilateral agreements).

Conclusion

The revival of India–US trade talks signals a strong intent to deepen economic ties, but **tariff disputes and domestic sensitivities** remain major hurdles. Without rollback of US oil-linked duties, progress will be limited. India's cautious openness (industrial tariff cuts but protection of agriculture and regulatory autonomy) reflects its **balanced strategy of promoting exports while safeguarding livelihoods**.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (IR):** India–US relations, global trade negotiations, WTO framework.
- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** Trade policy, tariffs, non-tariff barriers, impact on export sectors.
- **Prelims:** WTO provisions, concept of NTBs, constitutional powers over foreign trade.
- **Mains:**
 - *“India's trade negotiations reflect a balance between global integration and domestic protection. Discuss.”*
 - *“Examine the challenges and opportunities in India–US trade relations in the backdrop of recent tariff disputes.”*

5. DoT Questions Trai's Proposed Satcom Charges

Key Highlights

- **Regulatory Disagreement:** The **Department of Telecommunications (DoT)** has raised objections to the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (Trai)** recommendations on satellite communication (satcom) charges, especially those for providers like Starlink, OneWeb, and Jio Satellite.
- **Main Concerns of DoT:**
 - Objection to the additional **₹500 per subscriber annual charge** for urban users → difficult to distinguish between urban and rural subscribers, creating monitoring and compliance issues.
 - Sought increase in the **₹3,500 per MHz minimum annual spectrum charge**, especially for Mobile Satellite Services (MSS).
- **Trai's Recommendations (May 2025):**
 - Satcom providers must pay **4% of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR)** as spectrum charges.

SUBSIDY FOR DARK ZONES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Trai proposes a subsidy for installation of terminals to drive affordability in adoption of satcom devices in rural areas➤ The regulator has fixed a 'minimum charge' of Rs 3,500 per MHz for satcom players to	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ensure that they don't hoard spectrum and delay launch➤ It has not found any case of satellite services eating into broader business model of terrestrial telecom providers, such as Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea



- An additional **₹500 per subscriber (urban)** charge.
- Annual minimum spectrum charge of **₹3,500 per MHz** to ensure a revenue floor if 4% of AGR is lower.
- **Institutional Framework:**
 - The issue was discussed in the **Digital Communication Commission (DCC)**, comprising officials from DoT, NITI Aayog CEO, and secretaries of economic affairs, IT, and electronics.
- **Key Concepts:**
 - **AGR (Adjusted Gross Revenue):** Revenue calculated after deducting certain charges, forming the base for government's share from telecom operators.
 - **Spectrum Charges:** Fees paid by service providers for using radio frequencies; a key source of non-tax revenue for the government.
 - **Mobile Satellite Services (MSS):** Communications delivered through satellites, particularly crucial for remote/rural areas.

Legal & Constitutional Provisions

- **Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 and Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933:** Provide legal framework for spectrum allocation and licensing.
- **TRAI Act, 1997:** Empowers TRAI to recommend spectrum pricing and regulatory framework.
- **Union List, Entry 31 (Seventh Schedule, Constitution):** Union Government's exclusive power over "Posts and telegraphs; telephones, wireless, broadcasting, and other communication."

Conclusion

The tussle between DoT and Trai reflects the **regulatory challenges in balancing government revenue interests, industry viability, and equitable access** in India's emerging satellite internet sector. While TRAI emphasizes ensuring minimum government revenue, DoT is concerned about implementation feasibility and fair spectrum pricing. The outcome will shape the growth of India's **satellite broadband ecosystem**, vital for bridging the digital divide.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (Governance):** Role of regulators (TRAI, DoT), inter-agency coordination, policy formulation.
- **GS Paper 3 (Economy, Technology):** Spectrum allocation, digital infrastructure, satcom sector.
- **Prelims:** AGR definition, TRAI Act provisions, Digital Communication Commission.
- **Mains:**
 - *"Discuss the challenges of regulating satellite communication services in India in the context of digital inclusion."*

6. PFRDA Allows 100% Equity NPS Plans for Non-Government Subscribers

Key Highlights



- **Regulatory Reform:** The **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)** has permitted fund managers under the **National Pension System (NPS)** to design schemes allowing **up to 100% equity exposure** for non-government subscribers (effective 1 October 2025).
- **Multiple Scheme Framework (MSF):**
 - Subscribers can now manage **multiple investment schemes** through their PRAN (Permanent Retirement Account Number), compared to earlier rules permitting only a single allocation.
 - Fund managers may also offer **low-risk variants** at their discretion.
- **Investment Design Flexibility:**
 - Fund managers can launch **tailored schemes** for different subscriber profiles (self-employed, digital economy workers, corporate employees, women professionals, etc.).
 - Schemes may have **moderate and high-risk variants**, with the high-risk option permitting up to **100% equity allocation**.
 - A **minimum vesting period of 15 years** will apply, with exit allowed at **age 60 or retirement**.
- **Benefits for Subscribers:**
 - Greater alignment with **retirement planning and wealth-building goals**.
 - Ability to diversify into **equities, corporate bonds, government bonds, and alternative investments**.
 - More flexibility in portfolio management, including holding cash for market timing.

'MULTIPLE SCHEMES'

- > Split NPS savings across multiple schemes
- > New products for women, youth, age groups
- > Exit allowed after 15 years (from 50 onwards)
- > Up to 100% equity allocation permitted
- > One fee cap: To be set at 0.3% of assets
- > Hold multiple brands, single PAN-based ID

Key Concepts & Legal Provisions

- **NPS (National Pension System):** A voluntary, defined-contribution pension scheme regulated by PFRDA, open to government and non-government subscribers.
- **PFRDA Act, 2013:** Provides statutory basis for pension regulation in India; empowers PFRDA to regulate NPS and approve pension fund schemes.
- **PRAN (Permanent Retirement Account Number):** Unique account number allotted to each NPS subscriber for managing retirement savings.
- **Equity Allocation:** Refers to the percentage of an investor's portfolio invested in stock markets; higher allocation generally means higher risk and potential returns.

Conclusion

The move by PFRDA to allow **100% equity NPS plans** for non-government subscribers represents a significant **liberalization of pension investment norms**, aligning India's retirement system with global practices. It encourages higher returns for long-term investors while also offering diverse schemes for different risk profiles. However, it raises the need for **financial literacy and risk-awareness** among subscribers.

UPSC Relevance

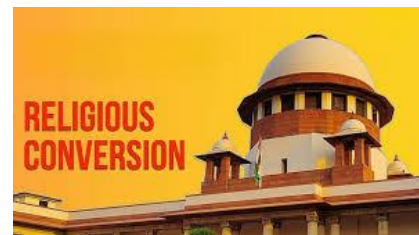


- **GS Paper 2 (Governance):** Pension sector reforms, role of regulatory bodies (PFRDA).
- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** Financial markets, investment regulation, retirement planning, capital market deepening.
- **Prelims:** PFRDA Act 2013, PRAN, NPS features, investment rules.
- **Mains:**
 - *“Discuss the significance of liberalizing equity exposure under the National Pension System for India’s non-government workforce.”*

7. SC Seeks States’ Views on Stay on Conversion Laws

Key Highlights

- **Supreme Court Action:**
 - The **Supreme Court (SC)** sought responses from multiple states on petitions challenging the constitutional validity of **anti-conversion laws**.
 - Notices were issued to states like **Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, and Karnataka**.
 - The Court gave **4 weeks** for states to file replies and **2 weeks** for petitioners to file rejoinders.
- **Nature of Laws:**
 - These laws regulate or prohibit religious conversions, particularly conversions through **marriage, coercion, undue influence, allurement, or fraudulent means**.
 - States like **Rajasthan** have also recently passed similar legislation.
 - Amendments in UP allow **third parties** to lodge complaints, leading to concerns of harassment in interfaith marriages and church activities.
- **Arguments Raised:**
 - Petitioners argue the laws are **“draconian”**, curbing individual freedom of choice in interfaith marriages.
 - Concerns include denial of bail, misuse through third-party complaints, and threats to religious freedom.
 - Senior advocates like **Indira Jaising and Vrinda Grover** pressed for interim stays on the laws in Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana.
- **Constitutional & Legal Context:**
 - **Article 25:** Guarantees freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion.
 - **Article 21:** Right to life and personal liberty, including right to marry a person of one’s choice (recognized in *Shafin Jahan v. Asokan*, 2018).
 - **Article 19(1)(a):** Freedom of speech and expression includes right to express religious belief.





- **Federal Aspect:** Public order is under the **State List (Seventh Schedule)** → enabling states to make laws on religious conversions.
- **Judicial Precedents:**
 - *Rev. Stainislaus v. State of MP (1977)* upheld validity of state anti-conversion laws but limited propagation rights to non-coercive methods.
- **Societal Concerns:**
 - Interfaith marriages often targeted under these laws, leading to harassment and mob intervention.
 - Debate on balancing **individual liberty** with **prevention of forced conversions**.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's intervention reflects the tension between **constitutional freedoms (religion, marriage, liberty)** and **state-level anti-conversion laws** justified on grounds of public order and prevention of exploitation. The outcome of the case will have far-reaching implications for **religious freedom, federalism, and personal liberty in India**.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (Polity, Governance):** Fundamental Rights (Art. 21, 25, 19), judicial review, federalism, legislative competence of states.
- **GS Paper 1 (Society):** Interfaith marriages, communal harmony, religious diversity.
- **Prelims:** Rev. Stainislaus case, entries in State/Union List regarding religion & public order.
- **Mains:**
 - *“Examine the constitutional validity of state anti-conversion laws in light of individual liberty and freedom of religion.”*

8. Israel Accused of Genocide in Gaza – UN Commission Report

Key Highlights

- **UN Commission Findings:**
 - The **UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry**, led by Navi Pillay, concluded that **Israel is committing genocide in Gaza** with intent to “destroy the Palestinians.”
 - The report marks the **first time a UN-mandated investigative body** has accused Israel of genocide.
 - Senior Israeli officials, including the Prime Minister, were accused of **incitement to genocide**.
- **Israel's Response:**
 - Israel **categorically rejected** the report, calling it “distorted and false.”





- The Israeli Foreign Ministry demanded the **immediate abolition** of the Commission of Inquiry.

- **Background Context:**

- Since the start of the Gaza conflict, Israel has faced **genocide accusations** from NGOs, independent UN experts, and global civil society groups.
- The conflict has led to widespread **civilian casualties, displacement, and destruction of infrastructure**.

- **Definition of Genocide (Key Term):**

- Defined in the **UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948)** as acts committed with **intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group**.
- Includes killing members of the group, causing serious bodily or mental harm, inflicting destructive living conditions, preventing births, or forcibly transferring children.

- **International Legal Provisions:**

- **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)** includes genocide as a core international crime.
- States have an obligation under **Article I of the Genocide Convention** to prevent and punish genocide.
- UN mechanisms (Security Council, ICJ, ICC) play a role in adjudicating such allegations.

Conclusion

The UN report intensifies global scrutiny of Israel's actions in Gaza and revives debate on accountability under **international humanitarian law and human rights law**. While Israel rejects the charges, the findings highlight the **political, legal, and humanitarian dimensions** of the conflict, potentially shaping international diplomatic responses.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations, International Law):** UN bodies, ICC jurisdiction, Genocide Convention, implications for global governance.
- **GS Paper 3 (Security Issues):** Impact of conflicts on civilians, humanitarian interventions, refugee issues.
- **GS Paper 1 (World History & Society):** Genocide as a recurring theme in international history (Holocaust, Rwanda, Bosnia).
- **Prelims Pointers:**
 - Year of **Genocide Convention (1948)**.
 - Distinction between **ICC** and **ICJ**.
 - Definition of genocide under international law.
- **Mains Angle:**



- *“Discuss the role of international law in preventing genocide and ensuring accountability in conflict zones.”*

9. Caregiver Scheme and Fire Safety Measures Launched on PM's Birthday

Key Highlights

- **New Caregiver Scheme:**
 - To be launched by Home Minister Amit Shah, the scheme provides **₹6,000 monthly assistance** to caregivers of persons with disabilities.
 - Eligibility: Persons with **40% or more disability** and certified as having **High Support Needs (score 60–100)** by district-level boards.
 - Funds will be transferred directly into **Aadhaar-linked bank accounts** for expenses such as caregiving, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, counselling, and assistive devices.
- **Social Justice Perspective:**
 - Aims to ensure **dignity, security, and emotional support** to persons with disabilities, shifting the approach from compassion to **rights-based empowerment**.
 - Falls under the **Department of Social Welfare**.
 - Aligned with the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016**, which mandates equal opportunities, accessibility, and state support.
- **Fire Safety Measures:**
 - Launch of **24 Quick Response Vehicles (QRVs)** equipped with **Ultra High-Pressure Pump Extinguishing Systems** for rapid response in fire-prone areas of Delhi.
 - Cost: **₹8.61 crore**, vehicles stationed at critical locations like Janakpuri, Rohini, Najafgarh, and Paharganj.
 - Enhances **urban disaster preparedness** and resilience.
- **Healthcare Initiatives:**
 - Inauguration of **101 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs**, **five new hospital blocks**, and **150 dialysis centres**.
 - Supports **Ayushman Bharat** and national health infrastructure goals.
- **Public Participation and Celebration:**
 - Events include a **blood donation camp**, **exhibition**, **‘Sewa Sankalp Walk’ at Kartavya Path**, and release of a special song “Namo Pragati Delhi.”
 - Over **400 students** participated in creating the song, fostering youth engagement.



Definitions & Legal Context

- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016:** Provides a comprehensive legal framework for protection of rights and state responsibility towards persons with disabilities.



- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Mandates measures for disaster risk reduction, including fire safety and emergency response.
- **Ayushman Bharat Scheme:** Flagship program aimed at universal health coverage through Health and Wellness Centres and insurance.

Conclusion

The launch of the **caregiver scheme** and **fire preparedness measures**, alongside health infrastructure projects, reflects a **multi-dimensional approach to social welfare, disaster management, and healthcare delivery**. It emphasizes dignity and inclusion of marginalized groups while strengthening public safety and health systems.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (Governance, Social Justice):** Policies for vulnerable sections, implementation of RPwD Act, welfare measures.
- **GS Paper 3 (Disaster Management, Infrastructure):** Fire safety preparedness, disaster resilience in urban areas.
- **GS Paper 1 (Society):** Social empowerment and dignity for persons with disabilities.
- **Prelims Pointers:**
 - Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.
 - Disaster Management Act, 2005.
 - Components of Ayushman Bharat.
- **Mains Angle:**
 - *“Critically examine the role of targeted welfare schemes in ensuring dignity and empowerment of persons with disabilities in India.”*

10. Sabarimala Again in Spotlight: Political and Religious Dimensions

Key Highlights

- **Global Ayyappa Sangamam:**
 - Organized by Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) on **September 20** at the banks of the Pampa river.
 - Aimed at marking the **platinum jubilee** and projecting **Sabarimala as a Global Pilgrimage Centre**.
 - Focus areas: **Sabarimala master plan, spiritual tourism, and crowd management**.
 - Participation expected from over **3,000 devotees worldwide**.
- **Political Flashpoint:**





- The event coincides with **local body polls and upcoming Assembly elections**, fueling suspicion of political motives.
- **Congress-led UDF** accuses CPI(M)-led LDF of hypocrisy for not withdrawing cases filed against devotees during **2018 women's entry protests**.
- **Sangh Parivar** opposes corporate sponsorship and "privilege cards" for donors, alleging politicisation of the shrine.
- **Supreme Court & Legal Context:**
 - SC had earlier delivered the **2018 verdict (Indian Young Lawyers Association v. State of Kerala)** allowing women of all ages to enter Sabarimala.
 - Protests followed, with strong opposition from traditional groups and custodians like the **Pandalam royal family**.
 - Current Sangamam is also under **fresh SC scrutiny**, with uncertainty looming over its conduct.
- **Community Equations:**
 - **Nair Service Society (NSS)**, once vocal against women's entry, has softened its stance, agreeing to representation if politicisation is avoided.
 - **Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP)** openly supports the Sangamam's global vision.
 - **Pandalam royal family's silence** adds suspense, as their opposition was crucial in 2018 protests.
- **Development vs Symbolism:**
 - The **Sabarimala master plan** has already been vetted by the SC and Ministry of Environment & Forests.
 - Hence, the Sangamam's promises of development may be limited, serving more to **reshape community and political alignments** than to deliver fresh projects.

Key Definitions & Constitutional/Legal Provisions

- **Freedom of Religion (Articles 25-28, Indian Constitution):** Guarantees religious freedom but subject to public order, morality, and health.
- **Essential Religious Practices Doctrine:** Judicial tool to decide which practices are integral to a religion. Applied in the Sabarimala case.
- **Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB):** Statutory body managing the Sabarimala temple and other shrines.
- **Sabarimala Verdict (2018):** A 4:1 SC ruling lifted the ban on women of menstruating age (10–50 years), terming it unconstitutional.

Conclusion

The **Global Ayyappa Sangamam** highlights how Sabarimala continues to be not just a religious site but also a **socio-political battleground**. With elections approaching, the event reflects attempts by political



parties to recalibrate equations with influential Hindu communities. Legally, it underscores the continuing tension between **constitutional rights, judicial interventions, and traditional religious practices.**

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 1 (Society):** Role of religion, social reform movements, and women's rights.
- **GS Paper 2 (Polity & Governance):** Fundamental Rights (Articles 25–28), judicial review, secularism.
- **GS Paper 4 (Ethics):** Conflict between constitutional morality and religious morality.
- **Prelims Pointers:**
 - Travancore Devaswom Board – statutory role.
 - Essential Religious Practices Doctrine.
 - Key facts of the 2018 Sabarimala case.
- **Mains Angle:**
 - *“Examine the role of judiciary in balancing constitutional morality with essential religious practices, with reference to the Sabarimala case.”*
 - *“Discuss the political and social implications of judicial intervention in religious customs in India.”*

11. Gujarat Implements PM Vishwakarma Scheme for Artisans

Key Highlights

- **Implementation & Reach:**
 - Since its launch in **September 2023**, the **PM Vishwakarma Scheme** has sanctioned loans worth **₹390 crore** for over **43,000 artisans** in Gujarat.
 - Of this, **₹290 crore** has been disbursed to **32,000+ beneficiaries**.
 - **Skill training completed for 1.81 lakh artisans**, with **2.14 lakh** undergoing three-tier verification.
- **Verification & Grievance Redressal:**
 - A **three-tier verification system** involves local **gram panchayats**, **district committees**, and a **state-level committee** led by the MSME Development & Facilitation Office.
 - A **helpdesk** has resolved more than **17,500 queries and grievances**, ensuring transparency and efficiency.
- **Coverage of Traditional Trades:**
 - Scheme includes **18 traditional trades** such as carpentry, blacksmithing, pottery, tailoring, masonry, toy making, and basket weaving.
 - Objective: **Preserve heritage crafts** while providing artisans with **modern tools, credit support, and market linkages**.





- **Scheme Features:**

- Provides **collateral-free loans, skill upgradation training, and digital empowerment** to artisans.
- Enrolment is facilitated through **Common Service Centres (CSCs)** across the state.

Key Definitions & Constitutional/Legal Context

- **PM Vishwakarma Yojana:** A central sector scheme focused on **supporting traditional artisans and craftspeople** with financial aid, skill training, and technology access.
- **MSMEs:** Defined under the **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006**, MSMEs are key drivers of employment, exports, and grassroots industrialization.
- **Constitutional Backing:**
 - **Article 43 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Promotes cottage industries and workers' welfare.
 - **Article 19(1)(g):** Freedom to practice any trade or profession.
 - **Article 46:** Promotion of weaker sections' economic interests.

Conclusion

The **PM Vishwakarma scheme** in Gujarat reflects a robust model of **artisan empowerment, traditional skill preservation, and rural entrepreneurship promotion**. By blending heritage crafts with modern financial and market linkages, it strengthens the **MSME ecosystem** and provides **inclusive livelihood opportunities** for marginalized communities.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (Governance, Welfare Schemes):** Implementation of PM Vishwakarma Yojana; State-Centre collaboration in welfare schemes.
- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** Role of MSMEs, rural entrepreneurship, employment generation.
- **GS Paper 1 (Culture):** Preservation of traditional crafts and heritage skills.
- **Prelims Pointers:**
 - Features of **PM Vishwakarma Yojana**.
 - MSME Act, 2006.
 - Traditional trades covered under the scheme.
- **Mains Angle:**
 - *"Discuss the role of PM Vishwakarma Yojana in strengthening India's traditional crafts and MSME ecosystem."*
 - *"How do welfare schemes for artisans help in achieving inclusive growth and cultural preservation?"*

12. SC Questions Tamil Nadu Govt. on Missing Idol Theft Files

Key Highlights



- **Case Background:**

- The **Supreme Court** questioned the Tamil Nadu government on **41 missing files** related to investigations into **theft of antique temple idols**.
- A petition alleged a **conspiracy involving police officials, bureaucracy, and the idol mafia**, highlighting systemic corruption.

- **Judicial Observations:**

- Justice R. Mahadevan stressed that it is the **State's constitutional duty to protect cultural heritage**.
- Justice B.V. Nagarathna noted the need to probe whether the files were deliberately destroyed, raising concerns about administrative accountability.

- **Petitioner's Allegations:**

- Advocate Elephant Rajendran alleged that **376 idols had been stolen**, many traced to **foreign museums**.
- Some idols are **1,500–2,000 years old**, making them of immense **archaeological and cultural value**.
- Claimed disappearance of files was the result of a **serious conspiracy**.



- **Government's Response:**

- Senior Advocate Sanjay Hegde informed that **some files were reconstructed** and **11 FIRs registered** regarding missing records.
- Some idols have reportedly been **recovered**.

- **Broader Concern:**

- The case highlights challenges in **heritage protection, illicit trafficking of cultural property, and accountability in governance**.
- Raises questions on whether **international conventions on cultural property protection** are being effectively implemented.

Key Definitions & Legal/Constitutional Provisions

- **Idol Theft:** Unlawful removal of religious or cultural artefacts from temples or heritage sites, often linked to the **illegal international antiquities trade**.
- **Constitutional Provisions:**
 - **Article 49 (DPSP):** State shall protect monuments and objects of artistic or historic interest.
 - **Article 51A(f) (Fundamental Duty):** Every citizen must value and preserve the rich heritage of India's composite culture.
- **Legal Framework:**



- **Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972:** Regulates export, trade, and protection of antiquities.
- **Indian Penal Code (Sections 378, 411, 409):** Covers theft, criminal breach of trust, and receiving stolen property.
- **UNESCO Convention 1970:** International treaty against illicit trafficking of cultural property.

Conclusion

The missing idol theft files case exposes serious **administrative lapses, cultural heritage vulnerability, and possible corruption in enforcement agencies**. Effective investigation, digitization of heritage records, stronger coordination with **Interpol and UNESCO**, and **legal accountability** are crucial to safeguard India's ancient heritage.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 1 (Culture):** Protection of temples, idols, and heritage monuments.
- **GS Paper 2 (Governance):** Role of judiciary, administrative accountability, state responsibility in protecting culture.
- **GS Paper 3 (Internal Security):** Organized crime, smuggling, idol mafia networks.
- **Prelims Pointers:**
 - Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972.
 - UNESCO 1970 Convention.
 - Constitutional provisions (Art. 49, Art. 51A(f)).
- **Mains Angle:**
 - *“Discuss the challenges in protecting India's cultural heritage from illicit trade and theft. Suggest reforms in governance and law enforcement.”*