



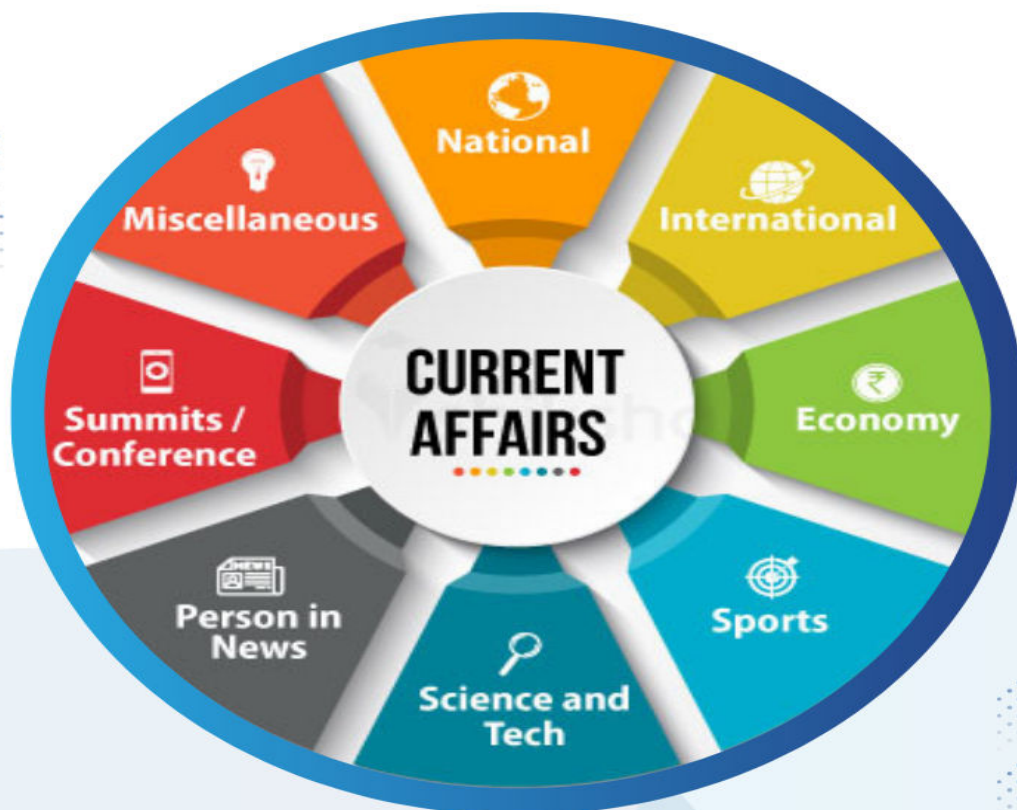
“ We help you reach for the star ”

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

# DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

**DATE: 19/09/2025 (FRIDAY)**



**9972258970 & 9740702455**

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



## **Table of Contents**

1. Saudi Arabia–Pakistan Defence Pact.....	2
2. U.S. Revokes Visas of Indian Executives Over Drug Trafficking.....	3
3. PM to Review National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal.....	4
4. U.S. Revokes Waiver on Sanctions for Chabahar Port.....	5
5. PM Modi Speaks to Nepal Interim PM: Support for Peace and Stability .....	7
6. Supreme Court Fines PWD ₹5 Lakh for Manual Sewer Cleaning.....	8
7. Equalising Primary Food Consumption in India.....	10
8. India Needs More Focus to Reach SDG 3 .....	11
9. Should India Overlook Boundary Issues while Normalising Ties with China?.....	13
10. India's Condemnation of Israel's Doha Strike.....	15
11. Onion Farmers' Protest in Maharashtra .....	16
12. DeepSeek-R1 AI Model: Teaching Itself to Reason .....	18
13. Trump's Statement on Oil Prices, Russia-Ukraine War, and India's Position.....	19



## 1. Saudi Arabia–Pakistan Defence Pact

### Key Highlights

- **Mutual Defence Clause:** Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have signed a pact that defines *an attack on one as an attack on both*, echoing principles of **collective security**.
- **Context of the Pact:** The agreement follows Israel's recent military offensive across West Asia, including strikes in Qatar, and reflects Saudi concerns over regional security.
- **Strategic Importance:** This is the **first major defence decision by a Gulf Arab state after the Qatar attack**, showcasing Riyadh's assertive regional posture.
- **Nuclear Umbrella Factor:** Saudi Arabia has long-standing ties with Pakistan, including **financial support for its nuclear program**; analysts suggest Riyadh may now fall under Pakistan's *nuclear umbrella*, countering Israel and Iran.
- **Leadership Role:** Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) and Pakistan's PM Shehbaz Sharif jointly signed the agreement, highlighting high-level strategic trust.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions (India's Context)

- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Advocates for *promotion of international peace and security*, settlement of disputes by arbitration, and respect for international law — relevant in assessing India's foreign policy approach.
- **UN Charter, Article 51:** Recognizes the *inherent right of collective self-defence* if an armed attack occurs, forming the legal basis for such defence pacts.
- **NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty):** Pakistan is a non-signatory; Saudi's nuclear alignment via Pakistan raises concerns about **proliferation norms**.



### Key Terms

- **Collective Security:** A system in which states agree that an attack on one is an attack on all, ensuring mutual deterrence.
- **Nuclear Umbrella:** Security guarantee extended by a nuclear-armed state to protect an ally.
- **Deterrence:** The use of threats to prevent adversaries from taking hostile actions.

### Strategic & Geopolitical Implications

- **Signal to Israel:** Saudi-Pakistan pact challenges Israel's nuclear dominance in West Asia.
- **Iran Factor:** Pact may deepen sectarian (Sunni–Shia) fault lines, as both Saudi and Pakistan oppose Iran's nuclear expansion.
- **Impact on India:**
  - India has deep economic and energy ties with Saudi Arabia; it must balance ties amid Riyadh's growing closeness with Islamabad.
  - The pact could embolden Pakistan, potentially complicating India's regional security environment.



- Raises questions for India's **West Asia Policy** under the "Think West" initiative.

## Conclusion

The Saudi-Pakistan defence pact marks a **significant strategic shift in West Asia's security architecture**, highlighting the rise of **nuclear-linked defence alignments** outside formal global treaties. It is a **direct message to Israel and Iran**, while indirectly complicating India's regional diplomacy.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations):** India's foreign policy, implications of regional security alliances, and collective security frameworks.
- **GS Paper 3 (Internal Security & Strategic Issues):** Nuclear deterrence, proliferation challenges, and regional security architecture.
- **Essay & IR Questions:** "Emerging security architectures in West Asia and their impact on India."

## 2. U.S. Revokes Visas of Indian Executives Over Drug Trafficking

### Key Highlights

- **Action Taken:** The U.S. Embassy in New Delhi has revoked and denied visas of certain Indian business executives and corporate leaders accused of smuggling **fentanyl precursors** into the U.S.
- **Family Members Affected:** Family members of the executives will also "face consequences," indicating a strict approach targeting entire networks.
- **Context:** Action follows U.S. charges against two Indian companies for *criminal conspiracy* linked to fentanyl precursor trafficking.
- **India-U.S. Cooperation:** The U.S. acknowledged **support from Indian authorities** in curbing the flow of synthetic narcotics.
- **Policy Link:** The move aligns with the **Trump administration's anti-narcotics strategy** to curb synthetic opioids, which are a major cause of drug-related deaths in the U.S.



### Constitutional & Legal Provisions (India's Context)

- **Article 47, Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP):** Imposes duty on the State to prohibit consumption of intoxicating drugs except for medicinal purposes.
- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985:** Primary Indian legislation controlling production, possession, and trafficking of narcotics and psychotropic substances.
- **Extradition Treaty (1997):** India and U.S. cooperation framework allows for extradition in cases involving drug trafficking.
- **Vienna Convention, 1988 (UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances):** Both India and the U.S. are signatories, binding them to international cooperation.

### Key Terms

- **Fentanyl:** A synthetic opioid, 50–100 times more potent than morphine; widely misused, causing overdose crises in the U.S.





- **Precursor Chemicals:** Substances used in manufacturing narcotics or psychotropic drugs, often diverted illegally from pharmaceutical or chemical industries.
- **Drug Trafficking:** Illicit cultivation, manufacture, distribution, and sale of substances subject to drug prohibition laws.

### Strategic & Geopolitical Implications

- **Bilateral Relations:** The issue highlights areas of **law enforcement cooperation** but also risks friction if Indian firms are perceived as major contributors to the opioid crisis.
- **Corporate Scrutiny:** Indian pharmaceutical and chemical sectors may face increased **international regulatory pressure**.
- **Global Context:** Links to U.S. domestic opioid crisis place India at the center of global drug control debates.

### Conclusion

The U.S. visa revocation reflects a **hardline stance on narcotics trafficking**, placing Indian firms under international spotlight. While cooperation between India and the U.S. continues in counter-narcotics, the incident raises concerns over corporate accountability and regulatory oversight in India's pharma-chemical sector.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (IR & Governance):** India–U.S. relations, international treaties on narcotics, and diplomatic consequences of criminal charges.
- **GS Paper 3 (Internal Security):** NDPS Act, drug trafficking challenges, and precursor control.
- **Essay/Case Study (GS-4 Ethics):** Corporate responsibility and ethical issues in cross-border trade involving harmful substances.

## 3. PM to Review National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal

### Key Highlights

- **Review Visit:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Gujarat (Sept 20) to review the progress of the **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC)** at **Lothal**, Ahmedabad district.
- **Project Vision:** NMHC aims to blend **history, education, and research**, showcasing India's rich maritime legacy.
- **Historical Significance:** Lothal, part of the **Indus Valley Civilization (c. 2400 BCE)**, was a **thriving port and trading hub**, symbolizing India's maritime strength 5,000 years ago.
- **Cultural Impact:** The complex will highlight ancient shipbuilding, navigation, and trade systems, emphasizing India's long maritime tradition.
- **Strategic Relevance:** Revitalization of Lothal aligns with India's contemporary **"Sagarmala" and "Maritime India Vision 2030"**, linking heritage with modern maritime policy.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 49:** Duty of the State to protect monuments, places, and objects of national importance.



- **Article 51A(f):** Fundamental duty of every citizen to value and preserve the rich heritage of the nation's composite culture.
- **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958:** Provides for preservation of monuments of historical importance like Lothal.
- **UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001):** Relevant in safeguarding submerged ports and maritime relics.

### Key Terms

- **Maritime Heritage:** Historical traditions, artifacts, and knowledge related to sea navigation, shipbuilding, ports, and trade.
- **Lothal:** One of the southernmost cities of the Indus Valley Civilization, noted for its dockyard, bead-making, and trading with Mesopotamia.
- **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC):**  
A project to preserve and exhibit India's maritime history through museums, research centers, and educational hubs.



### Strategic & Cultural Implications

- **Cultural Diplomacy:** Showcases India's maritime legacy globally, reinforcing India's identity as a historic seafaring nation.
- **Tourism Boost:** Expected to promote cultural tourism and generate economic opportunities in Gujarat.
- **Educational Value:** Serves as a research hub for archaeologists, historians, and maritime experts.
- **Soft Power:** Enhances India's image in international forums, linking past heritage with present-day strategic ambitions in the Indo-Pacific.

### Conclusion

The NMHC at Lothal is not just a heritage project but a **strategic cultural initiative**, reviving India's ancient maritime traditions and integrating them with modern maritime vision. It bridges history, research, and national pride, strengthening India's cultural soft power.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 1 (History & Culture):** Indus Valley Civilization, ancient ports, and trade routes.
- **GS Paper 2 (Governance & IR):** Cultural diplomacy, heritage management, and international conventions.
- **GS Paper 3 (Infrastructure & Economy):** Maritime policy, Sagarmala, and port-led development.
- **Essay/Ethics (GS-4):** Heritage preservation, cultural values, and national identity.

## 4. U.S. Revokes Waiver on Sanctions for Chabahar Port

### Key Highlights



- **Policy Decision:** The United States has decided to revoke the **sanctions waiver** earlier granted for the development of **Chabahar Port in Iran**, where India has been a key partner.
- **Background:** In 2018, the U.S. had granted India a special waiver for Chabahar given its strategic importance in connecting **India–Afghanistan–Central Asia**, bypassing Pakistan.
- **Reason for Revocation:** The decision is linked to the U.S.'s tightening stance on Iran under sanctions, especially after growing tensions over Iran's nuclear programme and regional activities.
- **Impact on India:** The waiver's withdrawal poses challenges for India's investment in Chabahar and affects connectivity projects like the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)**.
- **Regional Security Angle:** The move may create a vacuum, enabling China to strengthen its foothold in Iran through projects like the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions (India's Context)

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Advocates for promotion of international peace, settlement of disputes, and fostering relations among nations.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Governs India's trade engagements and could be impacted by external sanctions.
- **UN Charter, Article 41:** Provides for sanctions (economic/diplomatic) as a measure short of force; relevant in understanding U.S. unilateral sanctions outside UN framework.



### Key Terms

- **Sanctions Waiver:** Temporary exemption from sanctions, usually granted for humanitarian, strategic, or geopolitical reasons.
- **Chabahar Port:** A deep-water port in southeastern Iran, jointly developed by India, Iran, and Afghanistan, critical for regional connectivity.
- **INSTC (International North-South Transport Corridor):** A multi-modal transport network linking India with Central Asia, Russia, and Europe.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** India's foreign policy principle of maintaining independent decision-making free from external pressures.

### Strategic & Geopolitical Implications

- **For India:** Hampers India's ability to access Afghanistan and Central Asia without relying on Pakistan; may slow down India's connectivity and trade projects.
- **For Iran:** Pushes Iran closer to China and Russia, reducing Indian influence in the region.
- **For the Region:** Weakens collective efforts for stability and reconstruction in Afghanistan.
- **For U.S.–India Relations:** Tests India's balancing act between the U.S. (strategic partner) and Iran (regional partner).

### Conclusion



The U.S. decision to revoke the Chabahar waiver is a **setback to India's regional connectivity and strategic outreach**, limiting its ability to engage Afghanistan and Central Asia. It also highlights the challenge of navigating **unilateral sanctions** while maintaining India's policy of **strategic autonomy**.

#### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (IR):** India–Iran relations, U.S. sanctions policy, impact on regional diplomacy.
- **GS Paper 3 (Economy & Security):** Trade routes, port-led development, and strategic infrastructure.
- **Essay/IR Topics:** “Sanctions and their impact on India’s strategic autonomy” / “Connectivity as a tool of diplomacy.”

## 5. PM Modi Speaks to Nepal Interim PM: Support for Peace and Stability

#### Key Highlights

- **High-Level Dialogue:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a telephonic conversation with Nepal's Interim Prime Minister, reaffirming India's support for **peace, political stability, and development** in Nepal.
- **Strategic Context:** The call comes amid Nepal's ongoing political transition, where leadership changes have created governance challenges.
- **India's Commitment:** Modi reiterated India's readiness to continue cooperation in areas of **infrastructure, energy, trade, connectivity, and people-to-people ties**.
- **Neighbourhood First Policy:** The outreach reflects India's broader regional approach, ensuring political stability in Nepal as critical for South Asian peace and security.
- **Symbol of Trust:** Such high-level contacts emphasize India's role as Nepal's trusted development partner, countering increasing external influences, particularly from China.



#### Constitutional & Legal Provisions (India's Context)

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Advocates for promotion of international peace and friendly relations.
- **Article 73 & 246:** Vest foreign affairs and diplomatic powers with the Union Government.
- **Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950 (India–Nepal):** Provides a framework for bilateral cooperation on security, economic, and cultural issues.
- **SAARC Charter:** Both India and Nepal are members; cooperation aligns with regional integration efforts.

#### Key Terms

- **Political Stability:** A condition where governance is steady and free from frequent disruptions, essential for development and foreign investment.





- **Neighbourhood First Policy:** India's diplomatic approach prioritizing good relations and development partnerships with its immediate neighbors.
- **Soft Power Diplomacy:** Use of cultural, historical, and developmental ties rather than military means to influence neighboring countries.

### Strategic & Geopolitical Implications

- **For India:** Ensures stability in a key neighbor sharing an open border, critical for **security in the Indo-Nepal Himalayan region**.
- **For Nepal:** Indian support strengthens its development trajectory and balances external engagements, especially with China.
- **For the Region:** Peace in Nepal contributes to regional stability in South Asia, preventing spillover effects of political instability.
- **People-to-People Dimension:** Shared cultural, religious, and linguistic ties continue to anchor the bilateral relationship.

### Conclusion

India's outreach to Nepal's interim leadership underscores New Delhi's role as a **stabilizing force in South Asia**. By reaffirming its support for peace, stability, and development, India ensures that Nepal remains a partner in regional connectivity and prosperity while countering strategic rivalries in the region.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations):** India–Nepal relations, bilateral treaties, and regional diplomacy.
- **GS Paper 3 (Internal Security):** Significance of open borders and cross-border cooperation.
- **Essay/IR Topics:** “India's Neighbourhood First Policy and regional stability” / “India–Nepal ties: Balancing tradition, development, and geopolitics.”

## 6. Supreme Court Fines PWD ₹5 Lakh for Manual Sewer Cleaning

### Key Highlights

- **Judicial Action:** The Supreme Court imposed a **₹5 lakh penalty** on Delhi's Public Works Department (PWD) for violating its October 2023 order prohibiting **manual sewer cleaning**.
- **Incident:** Labourers, including a **minor**, were found cleaning drains outside the Supreme Court premises without protective gear — clear evidence of hazardous employment.
- **Court's Directive:** The fine is to be deposited with the **National Commission for Safai Karmacharis** within four weeks.
- **Accountability:** The Bench warned that non-compliance could lead to **FIRs against responsible officials** in case of fatalities or serious incidents.
- **Systemic Issue:** The Court observed that its directions had either not reached lower officials or were “consciously ignored,” indicating bureaucratic apathy.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions



- **Article 21 (Right to Life & Dignity):** Manual sewer cleaning without safety measures violates workers' fundamental rights.
- **Article 23:** Prohibits begar (forced labour) and exploitative practices; relevant for hazardous caste-based labour practices.
- **Article 24:** Prohibits employment of children in hazardous activities; directly violated in this case.
- **Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013:** Criminalizes manual scavenging and hazardous cleaning of sewers/drains.
- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986:** Prohibits employment of minors in hazardous occupations.

### Key Terms

- **Manual Scavenging:** Practice of manually cleaning, carrying, or handling human excreta/sewage — banned under the 2013 Act.
- **Safai Karmachari:** Sanitation worker, often from marginalized communities, historically forced into hazardous cleaning jobs.
- **Amicus Curiae:** A legal expert appointed by the court to assist in impartial examination of issues in public interest litigation (PIL).



### Broader Implications

- **Human Rights Issue:** The persistence of manual scavenging reflects structural caste-based discrimination and state failure.
- **Administrative Accountability:** Lapses by police and PWD in preventing child labour and hazardous work highlight weak enforcement of judicial directions.
- **Judicial Activism:** SC's intervention through fines and warnings reinforces the judiciary's role in upholding constitutional obligations.
- **Policy Gaps:** Despite multiple schemes and laws, rehabilitation and mechanization of sewer cleaning remain inadequate.

### Conclusion

The Supreme Court's fine on the PWD underscores the **urgent need to enforce the ban on manual scavenging** and ensure workers' dignity and safety. It highlights a **continuing constitutional breach** where vulnerable communities and even minors are forced into hazardous work.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (Polity & Governance):** Judicial accountability, implementation of welfare laws, rights of marginalized communities.
- **GS Paper 2 (Social Justice):** Vulnerable groups, child labour, manual scavenging abolition.
- **GS Paper 3 (Internal Security & Disaster Management):** Worker safety, urban governance, sewer management.
- **Essay/Ethics:** Dignity of labour, state accountability, and constitutional morality.



## 7. Equalising Primary Food Consumption in India

### Key Highlights

#### 1. Recent Poverty Estimates

- The **National Sample Survey (NSS) Household Consumption Survey 2024** has enabled updated poverty assessments.
- According to the **World Bank's Poverty and Equity Brief (2025)**, extreme poverty in India (living on less than \$2.15/day) fell from **16.2% in 2011–12 to 2.3% in 2022–23**.
- This suggests near elimination of extreme poverty; however, consumption-based analysis paints a more complex picture.

#### 2. 'Thali' as a Metric for Food Deprivation

- Traditional poverty measurement is calorie-based, but this ignores **nutrition, diversity, and satisfaction**.
- A **thali** (balanced meal of rice, dal, vegetables, roti, curd, salad) reflects holistic nutrition.
- CRISIL estimated the cost of a thali at **₹30 (2023–24)**. Based on household food expenditure data:
  - **50% of rural population and 20% of urban population** cannot afford **two thalis per day**.
- This indicates higher food deprivation than suggested by income-based poverty measures.



#### 3. Role and Limits of the Public Distribution System (PDS)

- PDS reduces deprivation, but **40% of rural and 10% of urban households** still cannot afford two thalis per day even after including PDS benefits.
- Subsidy distribution is skewed: **wealthier groups also access PDS benefits**. In rural India, the richest 5–10% get subsidies close to poorer groups.
- **Cereal consumption (rice and wheat)** has already equalised across income groups, showing the success but also the **limits of cereal-focused PDS**.

#### 4. Need for Pulse Distribution via PDS

- **Pulse consumption** is highly unequal: the poorest 5% consume only half of what the richest 5% consume.
- Since pulses are the main protein source for many Indians, expanding PDS to include pulses can **equalise primary food consumption**.
- Rationalisation of subsidies: reducing excess cereal distribution and targeting pulses would be more **nutritionally effective and fiscally sustainable**.

#### 5. Constitutional & Legal Context

- **Article 21 (Right to Life)** as interpreted by the Supreme Court includes the **Right to Food**.
- The **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013** legally entitles 75% of rural and 50% of urban population to subsidised food grains.



- PDS reforms must align with NFSA goals and **Directive Principles of State Policy** (Article 47 – duty of the State to raise nutrition levels and improve public health).

## 6. Policy Recommendations

- Rationalise food subsidy by **trimming excess cereal distribution** to higher-income groups.
- Expand PDS entitlements for **nutrient-rich food (pulses, millets, oilseeds)** instead of just rice and wheat.
- Ensure **progressive targeting** so subsidies reach the most deprived, reducing economic waste and ensuring social justice.

## Definition of Key Terms

- **Extreme Poverty:** As per World Bank, living on less than \$2.15/day (PPP).
- **Thali Index:** A food-consumption metric based on the cost of a balanced meal, used to estimate affordability of nutrition.
- **Public Distribution System (PDS):** Government-run food security system providing subsidised cereals and other essential commodities.

## Conclusion

While official poverty rates suggest near elimination of extreme poverty, **food deprivation remains significant**, especially in rural India. The cereal-based PDS has equalised staple consumption but fails to address nutritional deprivation. Expanding the PDS to pulses while rationalising subsidies for the better-off can **equalise primary food consumption**, reduce hidden hunger, and strengthen India's food security framework.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes, issues of food security, government policies.
- **GS Paper III:** Agriculture, PDS, nutrition, and poverty.
- **Essay/Interview:** “Right to Food and Nutrition in India,” “Balancing Food Security and Fiscal Prudence.”

## 8. India Needs More Focus to Reach SDG 3

### Key Highlights

#### 1. India's SDG Ranking and Progress

- India ranked **99 out of 167 countries in the SDG Index 2025**, improving from 109 in 2024.
- Gains observed in **basic services, infrastructure, and access**.
- However, **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)** remains a major challenge, particularly in rural and tribal areas.

#### 2. Current Gaps in Health Indicators

- **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR):** 97 per 100,000 live births (Target: 70 by 2030).
- **Under-5 Mortality Rate:** 32 per 1,000 live births (Target: 25).





- **Life Expectancy:** 70 years (Target: 73.63).
- **Out-of-Pocket Health Expenditure:** 13% of consumption (Target: <8%).
- **Immunisation Coverage:** 93.23% (Target: 100%).
- These indicators highlight India is **off-track in most SDG 3 targets**.

### 3. Reasons for Lagging Performance

- **Economic barriers:** high cost of healthcare, poor insurance penetration.
- **Infrastructure gaps:** weak primary healthcare in rural/tribal areas.
- **Non-economic factors:** malnutrition, poor hygiene and sanitation, lifestyle-related diseases.
- **Cultural and social stigma** preventing use of available services, especially in mental and reproductive health.

### 4. Policy Measures and Approaches Suggested

- **Universal Health Insurance:** Reduce catastrophic health expenditures and improve equity.
- **Strengthening Primary Health Care:** WHO highlights strong primary systems reduce hospitalisation costs and improve outcomes.
- **Digital Health Tools:** Telemedicine and integrated records can bridge access gaps in underserved regions.
- **School Health Education:** Embedding lessons on nutrition, hygiene, reproductive health, and mental health to instil lifelong healthy behaviour.



### 5. Global Lessons

- **Finland (1970s):** School-based health reforms reduced cardiovascular diseases.
- **Japan:** Compulsory health education linked to higher life expectancy.
- Such **structured, preventive health education** can improve long-term health outcomes in India.

### 6. Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Right to life includes the **right to health** (as held in various SC judgments).
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 47):** Duty of the State to raise nutrition levels and improve public health.
- **National Health Policy 2017** and **Ayushman Bharat** are key frameworks, but require scaling.
- India is also bound under **Agenda 2030 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals** to achieve SDG 3.

### Definition of Key Terms

- **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being):** A UN Sustainable Development Goal aiming to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages by 2030.



- **Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR):** Number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.
- **Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE):** Direct household spending on healthcare services, excluding reimbursements.

### Conclusion

India has made significant strides in SDG progress, but **health and nutrition remain bottlenecks**. Without urgent reforms in **universal health coverage, primary healthcare infrastructure, digital health adoption, and preventive health education**, India risks falling short of SDG 3 targets. Embedding health education in schools and restructuring healthcare delivery systems are crucial to achieve a **Viksit Bharat by 2047**.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Issues relating to health, education, and human resources; government schemes; role of WHO/UN.
- **GS Paper III:** Inclusive growth, SDGs, healthcare infrastructure, digital health.
- **Essay/Interview:** Topics like “Health as a Foundation for Development,” “Achieving SDGs in India,” and “Preventive vs Curative Healthcare Models.”

## 9. Should India Overlook Boundary Issues while Normalising Ties with China?

### Key Highlights

#### 1. Background of Recent Developments

- PM Modi’s visit to China for the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit** included talks with President Xi Jinping.
- Leaders agreed to **restart trade, resume air connectivity, and maintain peace along the border**, despite the memory of the **2020 Galwan clash**.
- Both sides reaffirmed being “development partners, not rivals.”



#### 2. Historical Context of Border Issue and Normalisation

- Since **Rajiv Gandhi’s 1988 visit**, India and China agreed to **develop ties in other sectors while setting aside boundary disputes**.
- In the 1990s, agreements emphasized **peace and tranquility along the LAC**.
- The **Galwan incident (2020)** disrupted this arrangement, reviving mistrust.
- The **2024 Border Patrol Agreement** acted as a diplomatic breakthrough, restoring some patrolling rights.

#### 3. China’s Strategic Posture

- China continues **infrastructure build-up on the Tibetan Plateau**, compelling India to strengthen its own LAC defences.
- China often **downplays India’s global stature**, treating it as a regional power, not a peer competitor.



- Chinese insecurities: India's **demographic dividend, growing economy, and supply chain potential** post-COVID-19.
- China also protests against India's **abrogation of Article 370**, linking it to border tensions.

#### 4. India's Concerns

- China is seen as **India's principal strategic threat**, surpassing Pakistan.
- Fears of a "Galwan-2" type incident disrupting fragile normalisation persist.
- India must invest heavily in **border security and infrastructure** to counter China's military capabilities.

#### 5. China's South Asia Policy

- Shift from **bilateral** to **trilateral/multilateral mechanisms** (e.g., China-Pakistan-Afghanistan, China-Pakistan-Bangladesh).
- China's intent: **limit India's influence in South Asia** and integrate neighbours into its orbit.
- Despite strategic competition, both nations remain economically interdependent, especially in **manufacturing and critical minerals**.

#### 6. Constitutional & Legal Context

- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution (Directive Principles)**: Promotes international peace and security.
- **Article 73 & 246**: Give the Union Government exclusive power over foreign affairs and defence.
- **Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961)**: Governs conduct of states in maintaining peaceful relations.
- **Border Peace Agreements (1993, 1996, 2005, 2013)**: Legal frameworks between India and China to maintain peace along LAC.

#### Definition of Key Terms

- **Line of Actual Control (LAC)**: The demarcation separating Indian and Chinese controlled territories, though not formally agreed upon.
- **Galwan Clash (2020)**: Violent confrontation between Indian and Chinese troops in Ladakh, leading to fatalities on both sides.
- **Trilateral Mechanism**: A diplomatic or strategic platform involving three countries for cooperation on security/economic issues.

#### Conclusion

India faces a strategic dilemma: balancing **economic engagement with China** while not compromising on **territorial sovereignty**. While past precedence shows that ties can progress despite unresolved boundaries, the **Galwan clash underscored the fragility** of such arrangements. Normalisation must be pursued cautiously, with strong border management, regional diplomacy, and economic diversification to reduce overdependence on China.

#### UPSC Relevance



- **GS Paper II:** India's foreign policy, neighbourhood relations, SCO, international organisations.
- **GS Paper III:** Internal security challenges, border management, defence preparedness.
- **Essay/Interview:** Questions on "Managing relations with China," "Balancing security and development," or "Is economic interdependence a substitute for trust in international relations?"

## 10. India's Condemnation of Israel's Doha Strike

### Key Highlights

- India condemned Israel's bombing in Doha (September 2024) as a **"violation of Qatar's sovereignty"**, marking a sharper tone than its past muted reactions to Israeli actions in Lebanon, Syria, Iran, and Yemen.
- The statement, delivered at the **UN Human Rights Council**, invoked **UN Charter principles** and international law, emphasizing **sovereignty and territorial integrity** of states.
- The move comes amid India's strong energy, diaspora, and diplomatic ties with Qatar, alongside concerns over the **Saudi-Pakistan mutual defence pact** signed recently in Riyadh.



### Why Qatar Was Treated Differently

- **Strategic & Economic Importance:** Qatar is a crucial supplier of LNG to India and hosts a **large Indian diaspora** (over 7 lakh).
- **Leadership-level ties:** Close personal relations between PM Modi and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.
- **Geopolitical context:** Israel's targeting of Qatar, which hosts U.S. military bases, signals a shift in Gulf security dynamics, compelling India to respond more strongly.

### Contrast with India's Past Responses

- **Muted stance earlier:** On Israeli strikes in Iran, Lebanon, and Syria, India either stayed silent or expressed only "concern."
- **Inconsistent reactions:** India initially avoided condemning strikes on Iran but later signed an **SCO declaration** that criticized Israel and the U.S., showing policy flip-flops.
- **Military appreciation:** Indian Army Chief in 2024 even termed Israel's pager-bomb attack on Hezbollah a "masterstroke."

### Silence on Gaza Crisis

- Despite over **65,000 deaths in Gaza** (including 20,000 children), India's responses have been cautious.
- India only termed killings of journalists and civilians as "shocking and regrettable" in August 2024.
- India, however, voted in favor of the **UNGA resolution endorsing the two-state solution** (September 2024), balancing between Israel ties and Arab sensitivities.

### Constitutional, Legal & International Principles





- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Calls for respect for international law and settlement of disputes by peaceful means.
- **UN Charter (Article 2(4)):** Prohibits violation of sovereignty and use of force against another state's territorial integrity.
- **Non-Alignment Principle:** India traditionally supports sovereignty and independence of states in its foreign policy.

### Definitions

- **Sovereignty:** The supreme authority of a state over its territory and freedom from external interference.
- **Territorial Integrity:** Principle under international law that prohibits states from promoting secessionist movements or violating borders of other states.
- **Two-State Solution:** Proposal for resolving the Israel–Palestine conflict by creating independent states of Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace.

### Conclusion

India's strong condemnation of the Doha strike reflects **pragmatic diplomacy rooted in strategic interests with Qatar**, rather than a fundamental shift in its West Asia policy. India continues a **balancing act** between Israel (defence cooperation, technology) and Gulf states (energy security, diaspora welfare).

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations):** India's foreign policy in West Asia, balancing strategic partnerships.
- **GS Paper 3 (Energy Security & Geopolitics):** Qatar's role in LNG supply and implications for India.
- **Essay/Interview:** Ethics of sovereignty vs. realpolitik; India's stance on sovereignty in global conflicts.

## 11. Onion Farmers' Protest in Maharashtra

### Key Issues Behind the Protest

- Since **September 12**, **thousands of farmers in Maharashtra** have been holding a phone protest due to distress caused by the **steep fall in onion prices**.
- Current market prices are around **₹800–₹1,000 per quintal**, while **production costs are ₹2,200–₹2,500 per quintal**, leading to severe losses.
- Farmers' stored **Rabi onions are deteriorating in quality**, forcing distress sales at throwaway prices.
- The **government's release of buffer stock at cheaper prices** through NCCF and NAFED further depresses the market.

### Impact of Price Stabilisation Policy

- The **Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF)** allows the government to build a **buffer stock** of onions to control price volatility.



- Onions are procured during surplus and released during shortage to **prevent hoarding** and ensure affordable prices for consumers.
- However, in the current scenario, farmers' stocks are competing with **cheaper government-released onions**, worsening their losses.
- This reflects a **policy mismatch**, where consumer interest is prioritized over farmer welfare.

### Farmer and Expert Demands

- Immediate **financial aid of ₹1,500 per quintal** for farmers.
- **Stable export policy** to avoid credibility loss in global onion markets.
- **Incentivising exports** to restore India's competitive position against rivals like China and Pakistan.
- Suggestion to **replicate Andhra Pradesh's procurement model** (₹1,200 per quintal support price) in Maharashtra.
- Stop NAFED and NCCF from releasing onions during a glut, or procure directly from distressed farmers at fair prices.



### Systemic and Structural Problems

- India exported **25.25 lakh tonnes in 2022–23**, but exports fell to **11.47 lakh tonnes in 2024–25**, mainly due to policy flip-flops.
- Importers like **Bangladesh and Sri Lanka have reduced dependence on Indian onions** due to inconsistent supply.
- Lack of **long-term storage infrastructure** and **processing industries** makes farmers vulnerable to perishability.

### Constitutional & Legal Context

- **Article 38 & 39(b)** of the Directive Principles: call for protecting farmers' economic interests and ensuring equitable distribution of resources.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955**: regulates stock limits and supplies of onions, often used for consumer price control but criticized for hurting farmer incomes.
- **Cooperative federalism aspect**: States like Andhra Pradesh offering procurement support can serve as models for Maharashtra.

### Definitions

- **Buffer Stock**: A reserve of commodities maintained by the government to stabilize prices by regulating supply.
- **Price Stabilisation Fund (PSF)**: A central government scheme to control inflationary trends and price volatility of perishable crops like onions and pulses.
- **Export Policy Flip-Flop**: Frequent changes in export restrictions (ban, quota, MEP – Minimum Export Price) that reduce India's credibility in global markets.

### Conclusion



The onion farmers' protest highlights the **crisis of income insecurity in Indian agriculture** caused by overproduction, weak export policies, and consumer-centric interventions. Without **stable trade policies, procurement support, and value-chain reforms**, recurring farmer agitations will continue.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2:** Agricultural policies, cooperative federalism in addressing agrarian distress.
- **GS Paper 3:** Issues of farm income, MSP debates, price stabilization funds, and agri-trade.
- **Essay/Interview:** Balancing farmer welfare vs. consumer interest, structural reforms in agricultural marketing.

## 12. DeepSeek-R1 AI Model: Teaching Itself to Reason

### 1. Evolution of AI Reasoning

- **Reasoning Definition:** The cognitive ability to follow logical steps, reflect on mistakes, and adjust strategies for problem-solving — going beyond memorization.
- Earlier AI reasoning relied on **human-labelled data** (supervised fine-tuning, chain-of-thought prompting), which was costly, biased, and limited creativity.
- **DeepSeek-R1 breakthrough:** Showed that **reinforcement learning (RL)** alone, without human examples, can develop reasoning behaviours like reflection, verification, and adaptability.



### 2. Reinforcement Learning in AI

- **Definition:** A machine learning technique where systems learn by trial and error, guided by **rewards for correct actions** and penalties for incorrect ones.
- DeepSeek used **Group Relative Policy Optimisation (GRPO)**, a form of RL that increased efficiency.
- The AI produced both *reasoning chains* (<think>...</think>) and *final answers* (<answer>...</answer>). Only correct final outputs earned rewards.
- Over iterations, the model began **self-correcting**, using reflective phrases like “wait” or “let’s try again.”

### 3. Achievements of DeepSeek-R1

- Performance on **AIME 2024 (American Mathematics Olympiad)** jumped from **15.6% → 86.7%**, surpassing average human scores.
- Demonstrated **adaptive reasoning**: short chains for easy tasks, longer chains for complex tasks → efficient use of computational resources.
- Improved instruction-following and safety alignment, with higher scores in **AlpacaEval 2.0 (+25%)** and **Arena-Hard (+17%)**.

### 4. Pros and Cons of RL-based Reasoning

- **Advantages:**
  - Reduces reliance on costly, biased human-labelled data.



- Encourages creativity and novel problem-solving methods.
- Can dynamically adjust computing power usage.
- **Challenges:**
  - Reinforcement learning itself is **energy-intensive**.
  - Still requires human input for tasks without clear ground truth (e.g., writing, ethics).
  - Raises **ethical and safety concerns**: potential misuse in manipulation, misinformation, or harmful content.

## 5. Wider Implications

- **AI & Labour**: Could reduce global dependence on exploitative annotation labour in AI pipelines.
- **Policy & Regulation**: Aligns with global debates on **AI governance, ethics, and safety standards** (e.g., EU AI Act, India's draft Digital India Act).
- **Constitutional Linkages (India)**:
  - Article 21 (Right to Privacy & Safe Digital Environment, as per *Puttaswamy Judgment*).
  - Directive Principles (Art. 38, 39): Ensuring technology benefits society equitably.
  - Emerging discussions under **Personal Data Protection Act, 2023** regarding safe AI deployment.

## 6. Key Terms

- **Reinforcement Learning (RL)**: AI learns via rewards and penalties.
- **Chain-of-Thought Prompting**: Technique of nudging AI to “think step by step.”
- **Reward Signals**: Feedback mechanism guiding AI's problem-solving.

## Conclusion

DeepSeek-R1 marks a **paradigm shift** in AI development by proving that **machines can teach themselves to reason** without extensive human examples. While this reduces costs and biases, it demands **robust safeguards, ethical oversight, and global regulation** to prevent misuse.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS-3 (Science & Tech)**: AI, Machine Learning, Reinforcement Learning, Ethical Implications.
- **GS-2 (Governance)**: Legal frameworks for emerging tech, Right to Privacy, Data Protection Act.
- **Essay / Ethics (GS-4)**: Impact of AI on society, human labour, and decision-making.
- **Prelims**: Definitions of AI, reinforcement learning, PSF (policy parallels with onion buffer stock).

## 13. Trump's Statement on Oil Prices, Russia-Ukraine War, and India's Position

### 1. Core Argument by Donald Trump

- Former U.S. President Donald Trump stated that if **global oil prices drop**, Russian President Vladimir Putin would be “forced to settle and drop out” of the Ukraine war.





- He emphasized that **stopping oil purchases from Russia** by the EU, NATO countries, India, and China was central to reducing Moscow's financial capacity to continue the war.
- Trump positioned **oil as the key leverage** in influencing Russia's strategic decisions.

## 2. U.S. Sanctions and Trade Tariffs

- The U.S. imposed **25% additional tariff** on Indian goods, citing India's energy and arms trade with Russia, in addition to the existing **25% reciprocal tariff**, making it a combined **50% tariff burden**.
- Trump argued that **China is already paying high tariffs**, hence further penalties on Beijing may not be feasible, while pressuring India to reduce Russian energy imports.
- This reflects the use of **economic sanctions as a foreign policy tool** to isolate Russia and discipline trade partners.

## 3. India's Diplomatic Balancing Act

- India continues to maintain relations with Russia (energy & defense ties) while simultaneously engaging with the U.S. and Western powers.
- Prime Minister Modi's recent meetings with **Putin and Xi Jinping** highlighted India's balancing diplomacy.
- Despite tariff tensions, recent India-U.S. relations have **shown signs of thaw**, with Modi extending support to Trump's initiatives on Ukraine conflict resolution.



## 4. Strategic Implications of Oil Diplomacy

- **Definition:** *Oil Diplomacy* refers to the use of crude oil supply, demand, and pricing as a tool to achieve geopolitical or strategic objectives.
- Europe's reliance on Russian oil has been a key challenge in sanction regimes. India and China have emerged as **alternative buyers of Russian crude**, weakening Western sanctions.
- Trump's approach underscores the link between **energy markets and international security**, where trade restrictions are leveraged to alter war outcomes.

## 5. Constitutional & Legal Context (India)

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles):** Advocates promotion of international peace and security, guiding India's stance in balancing ties.
- **Article 73 & 246:** Grant Union Government powers to handle external affairs and trade policy.
- **Customs Act, 1962 & Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Provide India's legal framework for dealing with tariffs, sanctions, and international trade obligations.
- **Energy Security** remains part of India's strategic autonomy doctrine — ensuring affordable access to crude oil while navigating global pressures.

## 6. Trade as Leverage in Conflict Resolution

- Trump admitted using **trade as leverage** in geopolitical conflicts, citing earlier claims of mediating Indo-Pak tensions.



- This reflects a broader U.S. foreign policy trend of **weaponising tariffs and sanctions** as non-military tools of coercion.

### Conclusion

Trump's remarks highlight how **oil prices and trade policies are being weaponized** in the Russia-Ukraine conflict. For India, this raises challenges of **balancing strategic autonomy, energy security, and relations with both Russia and the U.S.** The episode reaffirms that energy economics and global trade frameworks remain deeply intertwined with international diplomacy.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS-2 (International Relations):** India–Russia–U.S. triangular dynamics, sanctions, oil diplomacy.
- **GS-3 (Economy & Energy Security):** Impact of tariffs and sanctions on India's energy security and trade policy.
- **Essay / Ethics (GS-4):** Use of trade as leverage in foreign policy — ethical and strategic implications.
- **Prelims:** Key provisions of **Foreign Trade Act, Customs Act, and Article 51** (promotion of peace).