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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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1. Retail Inflation Eases to 8-Year Low of 1.54% (September 2025)

1. Key Highlights:

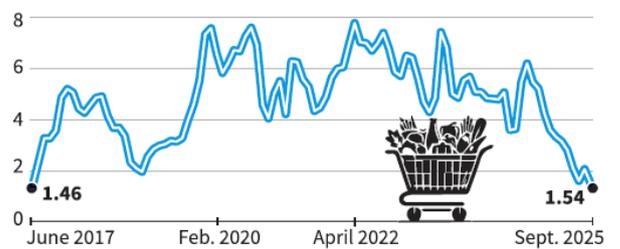
- Retail inflation, measured by the *Consumer Price Index (CPI)*, fell to **1.54% in September 2025**, marking an **eight-year low**, primarily due to declining **food and fuel prices**.
- This figure is **below the Reserve Bank of India's lower comfort limit of 2%**, indicating unusually low inflation levels.
- The last time inflation was lower was in **June 2017 (1.46%)**.
- In the previous months: July 2025 saw inflation dip below 2%, and August recorded **2.1%**, showing a continued downward trend.

2. Sectoral Trends:

- **Food & Beverages** group contracted by **1.4%** in September 2025, compared to a marginal **0.05% growth in August** and **8.4% inflation** in the same month last year.
- Experts attribute this moderation to a **favourable monsoon**, improved agricultural output, and a **favourable base effect**.
- Fuel prices also saw a decline, contributing significantly to the overall dip.

Historic low

India's retail inflation slipped to 1.54% this month, the lowest since June 2017. The chart shows Y-o-Y inflation rate (in %)



SOURCE: MOSPI

3. Definition and Key Terms:

- **Retail Inflation (CPI Inflation):** It measures the change in prices of a basket of goods and services at the retail level that consumers pay.
- **Base Effect:** Refers to the impact of comparing current price levels with unusually high or low prices from the same period in the previous year.
- **Favourable Monsoon:** Adequate rainfall enhances agricultural production, reducing food prices and thus inflation.

4. Constitutional and Legal Framework:

- **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (Section 45ZB):** Empowers the **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** to determine the inflation target.
- Under the **Monetary Policy Framework Agreement (2016)** between the Government and RBI, the **inflation target** is set at **4% (+/- 2%)** — i.e., acceptable range between **2% and 6%**.
- Thus, a rate **below 2%** indicates a deviation from the lower bound, prompting RBI's attention to potential **deflationary pressures**.

5. Economic and Policy Implications:

- **Positive Impact:** Increased purchasing power for consumers, lower borrowing costs, and price stability.
- **Concerns:** Persistent low inflation may signal **weak demand** in the economy or rural distress due to price deflation in farm produce.



- The RBI may adopt a **monetary easing stance** to stimulate demand and ensure inflation remains within the target band.

Conclusion:

The sharp decline in retail inflation to 1.54% reflects strong food supply conditions, effective price management, and a favourable monsoon. However, sustained low inflation could dampen growth prospects if it indicates reduced consumer spending or agricultural distress. The RBI's policy response will be crucial in maintaining price stability while supporting growth momentum.

UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 3 (Indian Economy):** Topics on *Inflation, Monetary Policy, RBI, Price Stability*.
- **Important for Prelims:** Concepts of CPI, Base Effect, Inflation Targeting Framework.
- **Mains Linkage:** Discuss implications of persistently low inflation on India's economic growth and monetary policy strategy.

2. Launch of Google AI Hub in Visakhapatnam

1. Key Highlights:

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** welcomed the launch of the **Google AI Hub in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**, marking a significant milestone in India's technological advancement.
- The project includes **gigawatt-scale data center infrastructure**, reflecting large-scale investment and technological capacity building.
- The Prime Minister stated that this initiative aligns with India's vision of "**Viksit Bharat**" (**Developed India**) and the goal of "**AI for All**."
- The AI Hub aims to **democratize technology**, making artificial intelligence accessible across sectors and communities.



2. Objectives and Significance:

- To make **AI tools and technologies widely accessible**, fostering innovation, efficiency, and inclusivity.
- To strengthen India's position as a **global digital and technology leader**.
- To enhance the **digital economy** by providing AI-based solutions to citizens, industries, and government sectors.
- To support the **Digital India Mission**, emphasizing technological empowerment and inclusive growth.

3. Definition and Key Concepts:

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** The simulation of human intelligence in machines programmed to think, learn, and perform tasks that typically require human cognition, such as problem-solving, pattern recognition, and decision-making.
- **Data Center Infrastructure:** Physical and digital facilities used to house computing resources, servers, and storage systems to process and manage vast amounts of data efficiently.



- **Democratization of Technology:** Ensuring equal access to advanced technologies for all sections of society, reducing the digital divide.

4. Constitutional and Legal Framework:

- **Constitutional Basis:**
 - **Article 38** – Directs the State to promote the welfare of people through social, economic, and technological advancement.
 - **Article 51A(h)** – Fundamental duty to develop a scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform, which AI promotion directly supports.
- **Legal and Policy Framework:**
 - **Digital India Programme (2015):** Promotes digital empowerment and knowledge economy.
 - **National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (NITI Aayog, 2018):** Focuses on “AI for All,” promoting inclusive growth in sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, education, smart mobility, and governance.
 - **National Data Governance Framework Policy (2023):** Ensures responsible and ethical use of data to promote AI innovation while protecting privacy.

5. Economic and Strategic Implications:

- The Google AI Hub will attract **foreign direct investment (FDI)** and create **high-skilled employment** opportunities.
- It strengthens **India’s AI ecosystem**, supporting startups, academia, and industry collaborations.
- Enhances **data localization and cybersecurity capacity**, aligning with India’s push for **digital sovereignty**.
- Supports India’s aspiration to be part of the **Global AI Partnership (GPAI)** leadership and future AI governance frameworks.

Conclusion:

The launch of the Google AI Hub in Visakhapatnam symbolizes a pivotal step in India’s digital transformation journey. It embodies the principles of “AI for All” and contributes to making India a global innovation hub. By aligning technological investment with the “Viksit Bharat” vision, the initiative strengthens the digital economy, enhances employability, and promotes inclusive technological progress.

UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 3 (Science & Technology):** Topics – *Artificial Intelligence, Digital Infrastructure, Data Security, and Innovation Policies.*
- **GS Paper 2 (Governance & Policy):** Role of Government and Private Sector in technology promotion.
- **Prelims:** Digital India, National AI Strategy, Data Center Infrastructure.
- **Mains Linkage:** “Discuss how initiatives like the Google AI Hub contribute to India’s goal of becoming a global leader in AI while ensuring technological inclusivity and economic growth.”



3. NITI Aayog Report – “India’s Blue Economy: Strategy for Harnessing Deep-Sea and Offshore Fisheries”

1. Key Highlights:

- NITI Aayog released a comprehensive report titled “*India’s Blue Economy: Strategy for Harnessing Deep-Sea and Offshore Fisheries*”, formally launched by **Prof. Ramesh Chand (Member, Agriculture)** and **Shri B.V.R. Subrahmanyam (CEO, NITI Aayog)**.
- India is the **second-largest fish-producing country in the world**, contributing **8% of global production**, supporting **30 million livelihoods**, and earning **₹60,523 crore in FY 2023–24** from fisheries exports.
- Despite vast potential, India’s **deep-sea fisheries beyond the continental shelf remain underexploited**, with an estimated **potential yield of 7.16 million tonnes** from its **2 million sq. km Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**.

2. Objectives and Significance:

- To **unlock the potential of deep-sea and offshore fisheries** while ensuring **ecological sustainability** and economic prosperity.
- To **reduce pressure on coastal fisheries**, promote **responsible utilization** of marine resources, and **enhance seafood exports**.
- To align with India’s **Blue Economy vision**, integrating marine resources into national development and **sustainable livelihood generation** for coastal communities.
- To establish **India as a global leader in sustainable deep-sea fisheries** through innovation, capacity building, and governance reforms.



3. Key Features and Policy Interventions:

The report proposes **six strategic policy interventions** for developing India’s deep-sea fisheries sector:

1. **Policy and Regulatory Reforms:** Overhauling outdated fisheries laws and introducing science-based governance frameworks.
2. **Institutional and Capacity Building:** Establishing specialized institutions for deep-sea research, training, and coordination.
3. **Fleet Modernization and Infrastructure Upgradation:** Introducing modern, energy-efficient vessels and developing cold-chain and port facilities.
4. **Sustainable Fisheries Management:** Promoting eco-friendly practices and biodiversity conservation.
5. **Resource Mobilization and Financing:** Ensuring credit access through public-private partnerships, subsidies, and blue bonds.
6. **Community Participation and Partnerships:** Empowering fisher cooperatives and clusters for inclusive growth and technology adoption.

4. Implementation Framework and Phased Approach:

The strategy is structured into **three phases** integrating central and state-level fisheries schemes:



- **Phase 1 (2025–28):** Foundation building and early growth through policy alignment and capacity development.
 - **Phase 2 (2029–32):** Scaling up operations, achieving **global competitiveness** in deep-sea fisheries.
 - **Phase 3 (2033 onwards):** Achieving **global leadership in sustainable fisheries**, with advanced technology and international collaborations.
- It also proposes an **indicative costing framework** and **monitoring mechanisms** to ensure ecological and economic sustainability.

5. Constitutional and Legal Provisions:

- **Article 48A:** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard oceans and marine life.
- **Article 51A(g):** Makes it a fundamental duty of every citizen to protect the natural environment, including marine ecosystems.
- **Maritime Zones of India Act, 1976:** Defines India's rights over the **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** and continental shelf for resource exploitation.
- **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2019:** Regulates activities along India's coastal areas to ensure environmental balance.
- **National Marine Fisheries Policy (2020 Draft):** Promotes sustainable and responsible fishing practices.

6. Broader Implications:

- **Economic:** Boosts exports, creates employment, and enhances India's contribution to the **global seafood value chain**.
- **Technological:** Encourages R&D and use of AI, satellite mapping, and digital tracking for sustainable resource management.
- **Environmental:** Prevents overfishing, promotes biodiversity, and ensures the **sustainability of marine ecosystems**.
- **Social:** Enhances income of coastal and island communities through inclusive development and cooperative participation.

Conclusion:

The NITI Aayog's "Blue Economy" report represents a landmark roadmap for harnessing India's vast marine potential. By integrating policy reforms, sustainable technology, and inclusive participation, it aims to strengthen governance and boost India's role in global fisheries. The initiative aligns economic growth with ecological stewardship, forming a key pillar of India's journey toward a resilient and sustainable Blue Economy.

UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 3 (Economy, Environment, Technology):** Topics – *Blue Economy, Sustainable Development, Marine Resource Management, Fisheries Sector Reforms*.
- **GS Paper 2 (Governance & Policy):** Government initiatives, inter-sectoral coordination, and cooperative federalism in resource management.
- **Prelims:** Blue Economy, EEZ, Maritime Zones of India Act, NITI Aayog initiatives.



- **Mains Linkage:** “Discuss the significance of the Blue Economy in promoting sustainable growth and livelihood opportunities in India’s coastal regions.”

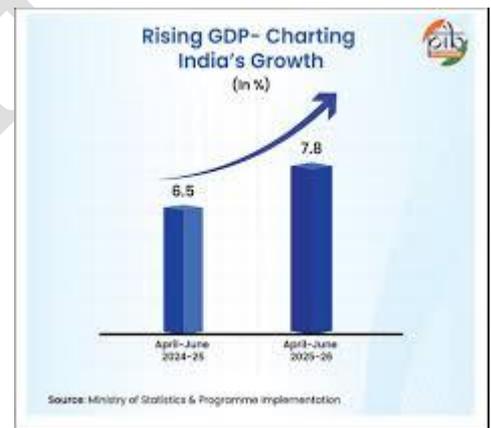
4. Estimating India’s Potential Growth Rate – Analysis and Policy Implications

1. Key Highlights:

- India’s **potential growth rate** is currently estimated at **6.5%**, based on long-term trends in **Gross Fixed Capital Formation Rate (GFCFR)** and **Incremental Capital Output Ratio (ICOR)**.
- Despite a strong **7.8% real GDP growth** in Q1 of 2025–26, it does not signify a structural shift since the GFCFR has remained stable around **34.5%** over the last three years.
- Historical data (2022–23 to 2024–25) show an average **annual growth rate between 6.5%–9.2%**, while India’s **long-term average (2011–2024)** stands at **6.1%**, supporting the 6.5% potential estimate.
- **Manufacturing and key service sectors** (trade, transport, financial, and public administration) continue to drive growth, but their Q1 performance in 2025–26 remains below pre-pandemic highs.

2. Key Concepts and Definitions:

- **Potential Growth Rate:** The maximum rate of GDP growth that an economy can sustain over the long term without causing inflationary pressures.
- **Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF):** Measures investment in fixed assets such as machinery, infrastructure, and equipment — an indicator of productive capacity.
- **Incremental Capital Output Ratio (ICOR):** Reflects the efficiency of capital; calculated as the ratio of investment (GFCF) to GDP growth. Lower ICOR indicates higher efficiency.
- In India’s case, with **GFCFR ≈ 33.6%** and **ICOR ≈ 5.2**, the potential growth = $GFCFR \div ICOR = 6.5\%$.



3. Investment Trends and Sectoral Insights:

- **Public sector investment** in GFCF rose from **21.6% (2021–22)** to **25.1% (2023–24)**, driven mainly by **infrastructure spending**.
- However, the growth in **Central Government’s capital expenditure** has slowed — from **39.4% (2021–22)** to **10.8% (2024–25)**, signaling reduced momentum.
- To raise potential growth beyond 6.5%, India must **increase the GFCFR by at least 2 percentage points** (to 36–37%) and **enhance private corporate sector investment**, whose share declined from 37% to 34.4% between 2021–24.
- Improved **technological efficiency**, better **management practices**, and **private sector participation** are critical for lowering ICOR and sustaining higher growth.

4. Structural and Global Factors Affecting Growth:

- **Positive forces:** Adoption of new technologies such as **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **Generative AI (GenAI)** could enhance productivity and reduce ICOR.



- **Negative forces:** Ageing capital stock and rising capital replacement costs may offset these gains.
- **Global trade challenges** (tariff barriers, supply chain disruptions) continue to limit export growth; **net exports** turned negative (-1.4 percentage points) in Q1 of 2025–26.
- Thus, **domestic investment revival** remains the main driver of long-term sustainable growth.

5. Constitutional and Policy Framework:

- **Article 39(b):** Directs the State to ensure equitable distribution of material resources to serve the common good.
- **Article 38:** Mandates the State to promote social, economic, and political justice for welfare-oriented growth.
- **Article 301:** Guarantees freedom of trade, commerce, and intercourse, supporting market-driven growth.
- **Key Policy Instruments:**
 - **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) and PM Gati Shakti Plan** – to enhance logistics and productivity.
 - **National Monetization Pipeline (NMP)** – to mobilize private investment.
 - **Union Budget Capex Push** – to crowd-in private sector investment.
 - **Make in India and PLI Schemes** – to strengthen manufacturing competitiveness.

6. Way Forward and Policy Recommendations:

- **Boost private investment:** Address sector-specific bottlenecks, ensure policy predictability, and improve ease of doing business.
- **Enhance capital efficiency:** Promote technology-driven production and skill upgradation to reduce ICOR.
- **Balanced fiscal strategy:** Sustain public capital expenditure while creating fiscal space through disinvestment and efficient revenue generation.
- **Diversify exports and global integration:** Expand trade partnerships and strengthen India's position in global value chains.

Conclusion:

India's potential growth rate of **6.5%** represents a realistic and sustainable benchmark under current conditions. While recent high quarterly growth figures suggest cyclical recovery, the absence of a structural break in investment trends indicates stability rather than acceleration. To push potential growth beyond 7%, India must stimulate **private sector investment**, enhance **capital efficiency**, and leverage **technological advancements** for productivity gains.

UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** Topics – *Growth and Development, Investment Trends, Capital Formation, ICOR, Public vs Private Investment, Infrastructure Policy.*
- **GS Paper 2 (Governance & Policy):** Government role in promoting sustainable economic growth.
- **Prelims:** Concepts – GDP, GVA, ICOR, GFCF, Potential Growth Rate.



- **Mains Linkage:** “Discuss the significance of the Incremental Capital Output Ratio (ICOR) in determining India’s potential growth rate. What policy measures are required to enhance India’s long-term growth potential beyond 6.5%?”

5. National Household Income Survey (NHIS) 2026 — Pre-Testing Report & Draft Schedule (PIB release: 13 Oct 2025)

1. Key highlights:

- MoSPI’s **National Statistics Office (NSO)** is launching the **first-ever pan-India National Household Income Survey (NHIS)** in **February 2026** to generate direct, household-level estimates of income for the entire country; a pre-testing exercise of the draft schedule was completed **4–8 Aug 2025** across 15 NSO regional offices and the Pre-Testing Report was uploaded on **13 Oct 2025**.
- NHIS aims to fill a long-standing data gap — its estimates will inform **CPI rebasing, national accounts, poverty and inequality analysis, and policy design** by providing granular income source and distribution data not captured fully by National Accounts.
- The Draft Questionnaire/Schedule (revised after pre-testing) is on MoSPI’s website for **wider consultation**; stakeholders may submit feedback by **30 Oct 2025** to designated MoSPI email IDs.



2. Why NHIS matters (policy & statistical significance):

- Household survey income data allow **inter-personal income comparisons** and analysis of income sources (wages, self-employment, property income, remittances) — critical for targeted welfare, taxation policy, and social safety nets.
- Direct household income estimates complement National Accounts by revealing **distributional patterns, under-reported informal earnings, and intra-household dynamics**, improving evidence-based policymaking.
- International precedent: many countries (e.g., Canada, UK, USA, China, Bangladesh) use dedicated household income surveys — NHIS places India on par with global statistical practice.

3. Methodology & field exercise insights:

- Pre-testing covered **urban and rural**, affluent and non-affluent localities across six zones (Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, Bangalore, Hyderabad), testing **clarity, comprehension, flow and respondent burden** to refine questionnaire design.
- MoSPI constituted a **Technical Expert Group (TEG)** chaired by Dr. Surjit S. Bhalla to guide methodology, indicating expert oversight and focus on international best practices and comparability.
- The survey intends to estimate **total household income** (all sources) and will use standard household survey protocols — attention to question wording, recall periods, and proxy reporting will be critical to data quality.

4. Definitions & key terms:

- **National Household Income Survey (NHIS):** A large-scale, representative household survey focused explicitly on measuring income levels, composition and distribution at household and individual levels.



- **National Statistics Office (NSO):** The statistical arm under MoSPI responsible for large-scale sample surveys (NSS tradition) and official statistics.
- **Rebasing CPI:** Updating the base year and basket/prices used for Consumer Price Index calculations — household income data help improve expenditure/income profiles for rebasing.

5. Legal, institutional & ethical considerations:

- Institutional mandate: **MoSPI/NSO** is the nodal body for official sample surveys; NHIS follows established NSS/NSO protocols and TEG recommendations to ensure methodological robustness.
- Data governance & ethics: NHIS must adhere to **confidentiality, respondent consent and data-security norms** and align with national statistical standards and international recommendations (metadata, sampling, quality assurance) to ensure trust and usability.
- Stakeholder consultation (researchers, states, sector bodies) and transparent pre-testing indicate commitment to **scientific credibility and cooperative federal implementation**.

6. Additional important points & implementation challenges:

- **Coverage & non-response:** Capturing informal, in-kind, seasonal and irregular incomes is methodologically challenging — questionnaire design and interviewer training are pivotal.
- **Timing & recall bias:** Choice of recall periods and methods to capture annual vs. periodic income flows will affect accuracy.
- **Linkages with administrative data:** Potential to improve estimates by linking survey data with tax, social-security and Aadhaar-linked administrative records, subject to legal safeguards.
- **Capacity & cost:** Nationwide implementation requires extensive field capacity, funding and a robust data processing pipeline; MoSPI's pre-testing and phased preparations mitigate risks.

Conclusion:

The NHIS 2026 is a landmark initiative to generate reliable, household-level income data for India — essential for accurate poverty measurement, CPI rebasing, fiscal and welfare policy design, and assessing inequality. The pre-testing and expert consultation process strengthen the survey's methodological foundation, but successful outcomes will depend on careful questionnaire finalization, strong field operations, data governance and stakeholder engagement.

UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 1:** Social stratification, poverty, human development indicators and interpretation of socio-economic data.
- **GS Paper 2:** Role of institutions (MoSPI/NSO), evidence-based policymaking, cooperative federalism in data collection and governance issues (data protection, transparency).
- **GS Paper 3:** National income accounting, CPI rebasing, measurement of poverty/inequality, employment/informal sector analysis, and policy implications for welfare schemes.
- **Prelims & Mains pointers:** Know definitions (NHIS, NSO, CPI rebasing), dates (pre-test: 4–8 Aug 2025; report uploaded 13 Oct 2025; survey launch Feb 2026; feedback deadline 30 Oct 2025), uses of household income data, methodological challenges, and policy linkages (poverty estimation, social schemes design).



6. NHAI Launches ‘Clean Toilet Picture Challenge’ under Special Campaign 5.0

1. Key Highlights:

- The **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** has launched a ‘**Clean Toilet Picture Challenge**’ under the **Government of India’s Special Campaign 5.0** to ensure hygiene and cleanliness at toilets located along **National Highways’ Toll Plazas**.
- The initiative encourages **highway users** to report *dirty toilets* through the **RajmargYatra mobile app** by uploading **geo-tagged and time-stamped photos**, along with basic details such as name, mobile number, vehicle registration number (VRN), and location.
- Valid reports will be **rewarded with ₹1,000 FASTag recharge**, credited to the reporting vehicle’s linked VRN. Each VRN can claim the reward **only once during the campaign period (till 31 October 2025)**.

2. Objectives and Significance:

- To promote **clean, accessible, and hygienic sanitation facilities** along national highways, improving **traveller experience** and aligning with the government’s **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)**.
- To ensure **citizen participation and social accountability** in highway management through direct involvement of road users.
- Part of NHAI’s larger effort under *Special Campaign 5.0* focused on **cleanliness, transparency, and efficient governance** across its infrastructure network.
- Reinforces the concept of “**Jan Bhagidari**” (**people’s participation**) in maintaining public assets.



3. Operational Features and Verification Mechanism:

- The scheme applies **only to toilets built, maintained, or operated under NHAI jurisdiction**, excluding those at private establishments like fuel stations or dhabas.
- Each toilet facility is eligible for **only one reward per day**, ensuring fairness and preventing duplication.
- Reports undergo **AI-assisted and manual verification** to confirm authenticity — manipulated or duplicate images are rejected.
- Geo-tagging, time-stamping, and image clarity requirements ensure **data integrity and real-time location validation**.

4. Constitutional, Legal and Policy Framework:

- **Article 47 (Directive Principle):** Obliges the State to improve public health, cleanliness, and living standards.
- **Article 21:** Interpreted by the Supreme Court to include the *right to a clean and healthy environment*, extending to sanitation and hygiene.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), 2014** and **Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin & Urban)** – key national campaigns for sanitation and cleanliness.



- **National Highways Authority of India Act, 1988:** Empowers NHAI to maintain and develop national highways, ensuring public convenience and hygiene along road infrastructure.
- **Special Campaign 5.0:** A Government of India initiative for *cleanliness, transparency, record management, and efficient service delivery* across ministries and departments.

5. Broader Implications and Benefits:

- **Behavioral Change:** Encourages civic responsibility and sensitizes citizens toward maintaining hygiene in public infrastructure.
- **Use of Technology:** Demonstrates *digital governance and accountability* through citizen-driven feedback mechanisms.
- **Improved Public Services:** Enhances quality standards of public amenities and aligns with the *Swachh Bharat* and *Digital India* visions.
- **Governance Model:** Promotes *data-driven monitoring* and *reward-based citizen engagement* for effective policy implementation.

6. Challenges and Way Forward:

- Sustaining cleanliness post-campaign requires **regular maintenance budgets and accountability mechanisms** for toll operators.
- Need to expand the initiative beyond toll plazas to **wayside amenities, rest areas, and service stations**.
- Continuous **public awareness, digital literacy**, and transparent reward disbursement are essential to ensure genuine participation.

Conclusion:

The 'Clean Toilet Picture Challenge' reflects a creative blend of **technology, public participation, and governance reform** in line with India's cleanliness and digital empowerment missions. By incentivizing citizen feedback, NHAI enhances accountability and sets a new benchmark for public infrastructure maintenance. This initiative represents a progressive step towards realizing the **Swachh Bharat vision**, ensuring that India's highways remain not only efficient corridors of transport but also models of cleanliness and public service.

UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 2 (Governance & Social Justice):** Citizen participation in governance, transparency, public service delivery, government initiatives.
- **GS Paper 3 (Infrastructure & Environment):** Transport infrastructure, public health, waste management, and Swachh Bharat initiatives.
- **Prelims:** NHAI, Rajmarg Yatra App, Special Campaign 5.0, Swachh Bharat Mission.
- **Mains Linkage:** "Discuss how technology-enabled citizen participation initiatives like the NHAI's 'Clean Toilet Picture Challenge' can enhance transparency and accountability in public service delivery."



7. Indian Railways' Hydrogen-Powered Coach and Green Transition – A Step Towards Net-Zero by 2030

1. Key Highlights:

- In **July 2025**, India successfully conducted the trial of its **first hydrogen-powered coach** at the **Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai**, marking a milestone in the Indian Railways' green transition.
- This innovation is part of the “**Hydrogen for Heritage**” initiative, which aims to deploy **35 hydrogen-powered trains** on select routes.
- The Indian Railways, one of the world's largest rail networks, targets achieving **net-zero carbon emissions by 2030**, four decades ahead of India's national commitment (2070).
- With over **24 million passengers** and **3 million tonnes of freight** moved daily, the Railways' decarbonisation directly influences India's overall climate goals and energy transition strategy.



2. Green Transition Initiatives by Indian Railways:

- **Electrification:** Over **45,000 km** of broad-gauge network electrified; now **98%** of total network runs on electricity, drastically reducing diesel dependence.
- **Renewable Integration:** Commissioned **756 MW** of renewable energy capacity (553 MW solar, 103 MW wind, 100 MW hybrid); over **2,000 stations** powered by solar energy.
- **Infrastructure Modernization:** Many railway buildings, including those in the **Northeast Frontier Zone**, certified as “**Shunya**” (**Net-Zero**) by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency.
- **Freight Transition:** Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs) aim to increase rail's freight share to **45% by 2030**, potentially averting **457 million tonnes of CO₂** emissions over 30 years.
- **Other Initiatives:** Introduction of **biofuel blends**, **green building standards**, and **AI-driven energy efficiency** for improved traction and logistics efficiency.

3. Financing the Green Rail Transition:

- **Green Finance Architecture:** India issued **sovereign green bonds worth ₹58,000 crore** since FY 2023, with **₹42,000 crore** directed to transport electrification, metro expansion, and suburban rail systems.
- **Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC):** Key player in climate-aligned financing — issued a **\$500 million green bond (2017)** for electric locomotive procurement; recently extended **₹7,500 crore** loan to **NTPC Green Energy** for renewable capacity.
- **Multilateral Support:** The **World Bank's \$245 million Rail Logistics Project (2022)** supports freight modernization, decongestion, and emission reduction.
- Integration of climate objectives into **capital budgeting** signifies a paradigm shift towards sustainable fiscal planning.

4. Definitions and Key Terms:



- **Hydrogen Fuel Cell Train:** A train powered by hydrogen gas that reacts with oxygen in a fuel cell to produce electricity, emitting only water vapor — making it a **zero-emission transport mode**.
- **Net-Zero Carbon Emissions:** Achieving a balance between carbon emissions produced and removed from the atmosphere.
- **Green Bonds:** Debt instruments used to finance projects with positive environmental outcomes such as renewable energy, electric mobility, and green infrastructure.
- **Shunya Label:** Certification awarded by the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)** to net-zero energy buildings in India.

5. Challenges and Policy Imperatives:

- **Energy Source Challenge:** Electrification must be matched with **clean energy sourcing** — drawing power from a coal-dominant grid undermines emission benefits. Direct procurement from renewable producers is crucial.
- **Last-Mile Connectivity:** Railway stations need transformation into **multi-modal green hubs** integrating EVs, bicycles, and pedestrian pathways.
- **Technology Adoption:** Broader use of **AI for energy optimization, lightweight coaches, and aerodynamic designs** needed to enhance efficiency.
- **Behavioral Transformation:** Green certification for trains, **carbon labelling** of freight services, and **public awareness campaigns** can foster citizen engagement in sustainable transport.

6. Constitutional and Legal Framework:

- **Article 48A:** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife.
- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental duty of citizens to protect and improve the natural environment, including air, water, and living creatures.
- **National Green Hydrogen Mission (2023):** Aims to make India a global hub for hydrogen production, supporting sectors like transport and industry.
- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC, 2008):** Includes missions on renewable energy, sustainable transport, and energy efficiency.
- **Railways Act, 1989:** Mandates modernization and efficient use of energy resources in railway operations.

Conclusion:

The hydrogen-powered coach symbolizes a **transformative leap in India's green mobility agenda**, merging innovation with sustainability. With strategic electrification, renewable integration, and climate finance, Indian Railways is set to become a **global model for sustainable public transport**. However, real success will depend on ensuring renewable power sourcing, fostering public participation, and sustaining fiscal prudence while scaling green technologies. By achieving **net-zero by 2030**, Indian Railways could save over **₹1 lakh crore** in fuel costs and prevent **60 million tonnes of CO₂ emissions annually**, reinforcing India's leadership in low-carbon development.

UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 3 (Environment & Economy):** Topics – *Renewable Energy, Hydrogen Economy, Climate Finance, Sustainable Transport, Indian Railways Modernization.*



- **GS Paper 2 (Governance & Policy):** Role of government and institutions in climate action and public infrastructure reform.
- **Prelims:** Hydrogen Fuel Cell Technology, Green Bonds, IRFC, Shunya Label, National Green Hydrogen Mission.
- **Mains Linkage:** “Discuss how Indian Railways’ decarbonisation initiatives contribute to India’s net-zero goals. Evaluate the role of technology and finance in achieving a sustainable transport system.”

8. Pakistan–Afghanistan Clashes along the Durand Line (October 2025) – Causes, Context, and Implications

1. Key Highlights of the Incident:

- On **October 11–12, 2025**, intense armed clashes erupted along the **Durand Line** between **Pakistan and Afghanistan**, resulting in heavy casualties on both sides. Pakistan claimed to have killed **over 200 fighters**, while the **Taliban** claimed the death of **58 Pakistani soldiers**.
- Pakistan’s military conducted “**precision fires and physical raids**” on Taliban camps allegedly linked to **ISKP (Islamic State Khorasan Province)** and other militant groups. The Taliban termed it an “**aggression**”, warning of strong retaliation against any future violations.
- The clashes followed earlier **Pakistani airstrikes inside Afghanistan (Kabul and Paktika provinces)** on **October 9**, which coincided with the Afghan Foreign Minister’s visit to India—viewed as a trigger for escalating tensions.
- Following the conflict, **Pakistan closed key border crossings** such as **Torkham and Chaman**, disrupting trade and movement between the two countries.



2. Geographical and Strategic Context:

- The **Durand Line** (2,670 km) demarcates the Pakistan–Afghanistan border, cutting through **Pashtun tribal regions** including **Waziristan and Chitral**.
- The **Paktika province** in Afghanistan shares its border with **North and South Waziristan** in Pakistan’s **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)** — strongholds of the **Mehsud and Wazir tribes**.
- Control over this region is strategic for both countries due to cross-border tribal linkages, smuggling routes, and militant sanctuaries.
- The region has historically seen recurring skirmishes, but the **October 2025 clashes** mark the **most serious confrontation since the Taliban’s return to power in 2021**.

3. Underlying Causes of Tension:

- **(a) Diverging Perceptions:** Pakistan’s **military establishment** views the Taliban as its **client or vassal regime**, owing to decades of support since the 1990s. The Taliban, however, seeks **strategic autonomy** and an **independent foreign policy**.



- **(b) Taliban's Foreign Engagements:** The Taliban's diplomatic outreach to **India, China, and Russia** — including visits by its foreign minister to **New Delhi** and recognition by **Moscow** — has alarmed Pakistan, which wants Kabul to remain within its influence.
- **(c) Support to Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP):** Pakistan accuses the Afghan Taliban of providing **safe havens to TTP militants**, who continue cross-border attacks. The Taliban, in turn, blames Pakistan's policies for fostering extremism.
- **(d) Refugee Deportations:** Pakistan's **deportation of Afghan refugees** since 2023, including registered ones, has strained relations further. The **UNHRC** and other bodies criticized Islamabad's actions.
- **(e) Border Closures as Pressure Tactic:** Pakistan frequently closes the **Torkham and Chaman crossings**, vital for Afghanistan's trade and connectivity, using them as **strategic leverage** against Kabul.

4. Broader Regional and Political Dynamics:

- Both nations are recalibrating their **regional alignments**: Pakistan has renewed ties with **Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the U.S.**, while the Taliban has strengthened relations with **China, Russia, Iran, and India**.
- The Taliban aims to diversify its **economic and diplomatic dependencies** to rebuild Afghanistan's economy and legitimacy, while **Pakistan fears encirclement** and loss of control over Kabul's policies.
- Internal instability in **Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan** — with frequent militant attacks — has deepened Islamabad's security anxieties.
- The **Pakistan Army's dominance** over foreign policy, marginalizing the civilian government and Parliament, continues to distort Islamabad's Afghanistan strategy.

5. Constitutional and Legal Context (International & Regional):

- **Durand Line Dispute:** Afghanistan has never formally recognized the Durand Line (drawn in 1893 between British India and Afghanistan), making it a perpetual source of tension and territorial ambiguity.
- **UN Charter (Article 2):** Prohibits member states from violating the territorial integrity or political independence of another state — relevant to Pakistan's airstrikes inside Afghanistan.
- **1949 Geneva Conventions:** Regulate conduct during cross-border military operations and protect civilians — potential concern in case of civilian casualties.
- **International Refugee Law (1951 Refugee Convention):** Pakistan's deportations of Afghan refugees may violate the **principle of non-refoulement** (not returning refugees to danger).

6. Implications for India and the Region:

- The clashes may lead to a **reorientation of Afghan foreign policy**, potentially **strengthening India–Afghanistan ties** and **reducing Pakistan's strategic depth**.
- Increased instability could spill over into **South and Central Asia**, affecting trade, connectivity, and security — particularly along **CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor)** routes.
- The situation may embolden **TTP and ISKP** elements, further destabilizing **Pakistan's western frontier**.



- For India, maintaining diplomatic engagement with Kabul while balancing humanitarian aid and strategic concerns becomes crucial.

Conclusion:

The October 2025 Pakistan–Afghanistan clashes reflect the **deep structural rift** between Islamabad’s establishment and the Taliban regime. Rooted in conflicting visions of dominance and independence, the confrontation underscores shifting power dynamics in South Asia. Unless both nations prioritize dialogue, the ongoing cycle of mistrust, border militarization, and proxy accusations may further destabilize the region. The Taliban’s growing outreach to global powers, including India, signals a **potential geopolitical realignment**, reducing Pakistan’s traditional influence in Kabul.

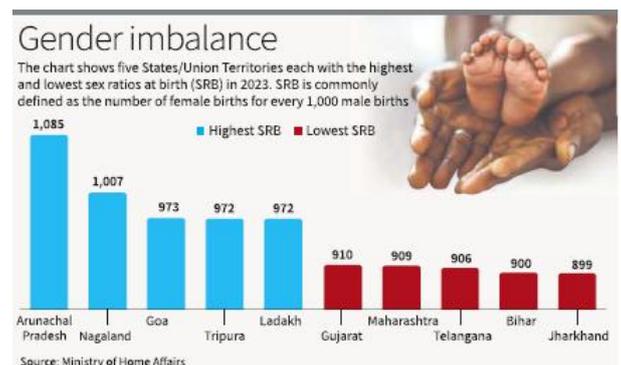
UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations):** India–Afghanistan–Pakistan relations, border disputes, regional diplomacy, refugee issues, and international law.
- **GS Paper 3 (Internal Security):** Cross-border terrorism, role of non-state actors (TTP, ISKP), and implications for India’s security.
- **Prelims:** Durand Line, TTP, ISKP, Chaman & Torkham crossings, Fitna al Khwarij (FAK), and Fitna al Hindustan (FAH).
- **Mains Linkage:** “Examine the evolving Pakistan–Afghanistan relationship in the context of regional security and India’s strategic interests.”

9. Decline in Births and Slight Rise in Deaths – Vital Statistics of India (CRS Report 2023)

1. Key Highlights of the Report:

- The **Vital Statistics of India 2023**, based on the **Civil Registration System (CRS)** compiled by the **Registrar General of India (RGI)**, recorded **2.52 crore births** and **86.6 lakh deaths** in 2023.
- This marks a **decline of around 2.32 lakh births** compared to 2022, while **deaths increased marginally from 86.5 lakh (2022) to 86.6 lakh (2023)**.
- The data indicate that post-pandemic, **birth rates are slowing**, and death registrations have stabilized after the spike in **2021 (1.02 crore deaths)** caused by COVID-19.
- **Overall birth registration** stood at **98.4%**, showing strong institutional compliance, while **institutional births** accounted for **74.7%** of all registered births.



2. Demographic Trends and Pandemic Impact:

- The CRS data reflect **no major spike in deaths** in 2022–23, suggesting normalization after the pandemic’s peak mortality year of 2021.
- In **2020**, India recorded **81.2 lakh deaths**, which sharply rose to **102.2 lakh in 2021**, marking an excess of **21 lakh deaths**, attributed to the second COVID wave.



- The **decline in births** in 2023 may be linked to **demographic transition, urbanization, and delayed family planning** trends, not only pandemic effects.
- The demographic pattern points toward India's gradual shift from a **high birth-high death rate** regime to a **low birth-low death rate** stage — consistent with **demographic transition theory**.

3. Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB): Indicators of Gender Imbalance:

- **Lowest SRB:** Jharkhand (899), Bihar (900), Telangana (906), Maharashtra (909), Gujarat (910), Haryana (911), Mizoram (911).
- **Highest SRB:** Arunachal Pradesh (1,085), Nagaland (1,007), Goa (973), Ladakh and Tripura (972), Kerala (967).
- **Bihar** continues to record the **lowest SRB since 2020**, reflecting persistent **gender bias** and possible **sex-selective practices** in northern and central states.
- **Sex Ratio at Birth (SRB):** Defined as the **number of female births per 1,000 male births**, is a critical indicator of gender equity and demographic health.

4. Statewise Registration Performance:

- **More than 90% timely registration (within 21 days):** Gujarat, Puducherry, Chandigarh, Daman & Diu, Tamil Nadu, Lakshadweep, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Goa, and Punjab.
- **80–90% timely registration:** Odisha, Mizoram, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh.
- **50–80% timely registration:** Assam, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Telangana, Kerala, Karnataka, Bihar, Rajasthan, J&K, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Meghalaya, and Uttar Pradesh.
- The **CRS coverage** indicates near-universal registration but reveals **interstate disparities in timeliness and completeness**.

5. Constitutional, Legal, and Policy Framework:

- **Article 246 (List III – Concurrent List):** Population statistics and vital events (births and deaths) fall under concurrent jurisdiction — both Union and States share responsibility.
- **Registration of Births and Deaths Act, 1969:** Mandates compulsory registration of births and deaths within **21 days** across India.
- **Article 21 (Right to Life):** Accurate birth and death registration underpins access to social security, identity, and public health entitlements, forming a core component of **good governance**.
- **SDG 16.9:** Ensures *legal identity for all, including birth registration*, by 2030 — CRS is the institutional mechanism for this in India.
- **Census and National Population Register (NPR):** Use CRS data for planning, welfare targeting, and demographic analysis.

6. Broader Socio-Economic and Policy Implications:

- The **decline in births** suggests India may be nearing **population stabilization** ahead of projections, with implications for labour supply, ageing, and social policy.
- **Slight rise in deaths** post-pandemic reflects **improved registration efficiency** rather than a demographic crisis.



- Persisting **gender imbalance in SRB** highlights the need for enforcement of the **PCPNDT Act, 1994**, gender sensitization, and stronger **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao** initiatives.
- High **institutional birth share (74.7%)** shows progress in **maternal and child health**, aligning with the **National Health Mission (NHM)** objectives.

Conclusion:

The CRS 2023 report signifies a maturing civil registration system with near-universal coverage, providing critical insights into India's demographic transition. While births are gradually declining — reflecting social modernization and family planning success — the persistence of skewed sex ratios in several states remains a concern. Strengthening gender equity, ensuring timely registration, and leveraging CRS data for welfare delivery are key policy priorities. The stabilization of death registrations post-COVID also underscores resilience in India's demographic and health systems.

UPSC Relevance:

- **GS Paper 1 (Indian Society & Demographics):** Population trends, demographic transition, sex ratio.
- **GS Paper 2 (Governance & Social Justice):** Registration of Births and Deaths Act, identity-based welfare delivery, gender equity, and institutional capacity.
- **GS Paper 3 (Economy & Health):** Linkages between demographic data, health infrastructure, and planning.
- **Prelims:** CRS, Registrar General of India (RGI), RBD Act 1969, Sex Ratio at Birth, SDG 16.9.
- **Mains Linkage:** *“Discuss how accurate vital statistics through the Civil Registration System contribute to effective policy formulation and demographic planning in India.”*

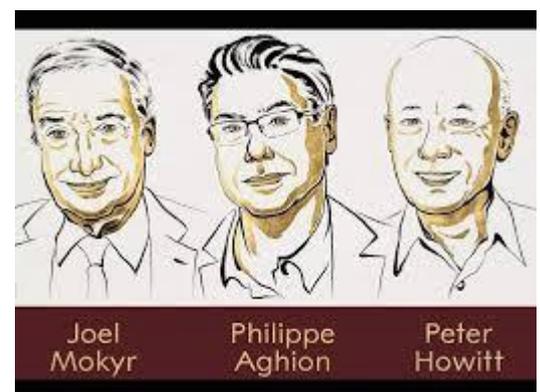
10. Joel Mokyr, Philippe Aghion & Peter Howitt Win 2025 Nobel Prize in Economics

1. Award & Rationale:

- The **2025 Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences** was awarded to **Joel Mokyr, Philippe Aghion, and Peter Howitt** for their pioneering work on **innovation-driven economic growth**.
- Mokyr was recognized for explaining the **historical and institutional conditions** that enable sustained technological progress, while Aghion and Howitt were honored for their **theory of sustained growth through “creative destruction.”**

2. Mokyr's Contribution – Historical and Institutional Insights:

- Joel Mokyr's research links the **Industrial Revolution and modern economic growth** to the interaction between practical inventions (**know-how**) and scientific understanding (**know-why**).
- He emphasizes the importance of **institutions, culture, and the accumulation of knowledge** in enabling societies to innovate continuously.
- His work highlights that growth is not merely about capital or labor but about creating a social environment that **encourages curiosity, experimentation, and learning**.





3. Aghion & Howitt – The “Creative Destruction” Model:

- Philippe Aghion and Peter Howitt developed a formal model of **endogenous growth**, where innovation arises from within the economy.
- Their concept of **creative destruction** explains how new technologies replace outdated ones, generating long-term growth but also displacing older firms and workers.
- They demonstrated that sustained innovation depends on **incentives for R&D, healthy competition, education, and dynamic institutions** that can absorb change.

4. Key Concepts and Definitions:

- **Creative Destruction:** A process where innovation leads to the replacement of old industries, firms, or technologies with new ones, driving structural transformation and economic progress.
- **Endogenous Growth Theory:** A framework explaining that growth results from internal factors such as innovation, human capital, and knowledge spillovers, rather than external shocks.
- **Innovation-Driven Growth:** Economic progress led by technological advancement, entrepreneurship, and continuous productivity improvements.

5. Policy Lessons and Global Significance:

- Economic progress depends on **continuous innovation, institutional flexibility, and investment in education and research**.
- Governments must balance **innovation incentives with social protections**, as creative destruction can cause short-term job losses or inequality.
- Policies promoting **competition, intellectual property rights, and open markets** are vital for fostering sustainable innovation.
- Their work reinforces the need for **inclusive growth strategies** that integrate innovation while ensuring social and economic equity.

6. Constitutional, Legal, and Indian Context:

- **Article 51A(h):** Encourages the development of scientific temper, humanism, and reform — aligning with Mokyr’s emphasis on knowledge culture.
- **Article 38 & 39(b):** Direct the State to promote social and economic welfare, ensuring equitable distribution of resources generated through innovation.
- **India’s Policy Context:** Initiatives like **Startup India, Atal Innovation Mission, Digital India, and National R&D Policy** aim to create a knowledge-driven economy, resonating with the laureates’ ideas.

Conclusion:

The Nobel Prize for Mokyr, Aghion, and Howitt highlights that **innovation is the engine of sustainable growth**. Their collective work shows that societies progress when they encourage scientific inquiry, institutional openness, and adaptability to technological change. The idea of “creative destruction” remains central to balancing progress with inclusion—reminding policymakers that innovation must serve both **economic dynamism and social stability**.

UPSC Relevance:



- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** Innovation, growth models, creative destruction, role of R&D in development.
- **GS Paper 2 (Governance & Policy):** Institutional reforms and government role in fostering innovation.
- **Prelims:** Nobel Prize in Economics, Creative Destruction, Endogenous Growth Theory.
- **Mains Linkage:** “Discuss how innovation-driven growth models can inform India’s policy framework for achieving inclusive and sustainable economic growth.”

11. Taliban Minister Calls for Easing Visa Regime and Enhanced India–Afghanistan Trade

1. Key Highlights of the Visit and Statement:

- **Afghanistan’s Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi** (of the Taliban administration) addressed a business gathering at the **Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI)**, urging **greater economic connectivity and liberalisation of the visa regime** between India and Afghanistan.
- He emphasized that **easier visa procedures** would strengthen **people-to-people ties**, business exchanges, and cultural linkages.
- Mr. Muttaqi called for **enhanced trade cooperation**, especially in **fresh fruits, dry fruits, and mining sectors**, highlighting Afghanistan’s natural resource potential and agricultural surplus.
- He assured that the **Taliban administration will ensure security and a peaceful business environment** for Indian enterprises, especially in **pharmaceuticals and manufacturing sectors**.
- The Taliban has invited **Indian pharmaceutical companies to set up manufacturing units in Afghanistan**, promising profitable ventures and local cooperation.



2. Strategic and Economic Context:

- India was one of Afghanistan’s **largest regional trading partners** before 2021, with key exports to Afghanistan including **pharmaceuticals, textiles, machinery**, while Afghanistan’s exports to India were primarily **dry fruits, fresh fruits, and carpets**.
- Trade between the two countries has been affected since the **Taliban’s takeover in August 2021**, due to lack of formal diplomatic recognition, restrictions on financial flows, and logistical challenges.
- The Taliban’s outreach represents a **strategic attempt to normalize economic ties** and reduce dependence on Pakistan for trade and connectivity.
- Afghanistan seeks access to **Indian markets via Chabahar Port (Iran)** and land-based routes through Pakistan, but **Islamabad’s restrictions** remain a major bottleneck.

3. India’s Policy Position and Diplomatic Approach:



- India has **not officially recognized the Taliban government**, but maintains a “**pragmatic engagement**” policy through humanitarian aid, medical support, and technical assistance via its **Delhi-based Afghanistan mission**.
- India re-opened a **technical office in Kabul in 2022** to oversee humanitarian operations but continues to emphasize an **inclusive and moderate governance structure** in Afghanistan.
- India remains cautious due to security concerns, especially **terrorist sanctuaries, cross-border radicalization**, and the Taliban’s **links with Pakistan-based groups**.

4. Legal, Constitutional, and Policy Framework (India’s Perspective):

- **Article 51(c) of the Indian Constitution:** Advocates fostering respect for international law and treaty obligations in foreign relations.
- **Article 73:** Empowers the Union government to conduct foreign affairs and enter into trade and diplomatic engagements.
- India’s **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP)** and **Act East/Connect Central Asia Policy** emphasize strengthening regional trade and connectivity — relevant to Indo-Afghan engagement.
- India’s **Chabahar Port Project** (Iran) and **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** provide alternate connectivity routes to Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan.

5. Economic and Geopolitical Implications:

- **Economic Angle:** Reviving Indo-Afghan trade could boost India’s regional trade footprint and provide Afghanistan access to essential goods, medicines, and markets.
- **Strategic Angle:** Enhanced trade ties could reduce Taliban’s dependency on Pakistan and provide India leverage in Central Asia.
- **Security Angle:** Engagement must ensure **humanitarian assistance does not empower extremist networks** or violate international sanctions.
- **Geopolitical Angle:** India’s calibrated engagement aligns with its objective of ensuring a **stable, independent Afghanistan** not used as a base for terrorism.

6. Key Terms and Definitions:

- **Visa Liberalisation:** Policy of simplifying visa procedures to promote tourism, business, and people-to-people contact between nations.
- **People-to-People Connectivity:** Non-governmental cultural, educational, and commercial interaction that enhances mutual understanding between societies.
- **Taliban Administration:** De facto governing authority of Afghanistan since August 2021, not officially recognized by most nations including India.

Conclusion:

The Taliban Foreign Minister’s call for easing the visa regime and strengthening trade with India reflects **Afghanistan’s attempt to revive economic engagement and diversify partnerships** amid growing isolation. For India, this presents both **an opportunity and a challenge** — balancing strategic interests, humanitarian priorities, and security imperatives. A cautious yet constructive engagement could help India sustain its **soft power influence** in Afghanistan while promoting **regional connectivity and stability**.

UPSC Relevance:



- **GS Paper 2 (International Relations):** India–Afghanistan relations, regional diplomacy, and India’s foreign policy strategy in South and Central Asia.
 - **GS Paper 3 (Economy & Security):** Regional trade cooperation, connectivity corridors (Chabahar Port, INSTC), and implications for economic diplomacy.
 - **Prelims:** FICCI, Chabahar Port, INSTC, Taliban administration, India-Afghanistan trade composition.
 - **Mains Linkage:** *“Evaluate the prospects and challenges for India in re-engaging economically with Afghanistan under the Taliban regime.”*
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