



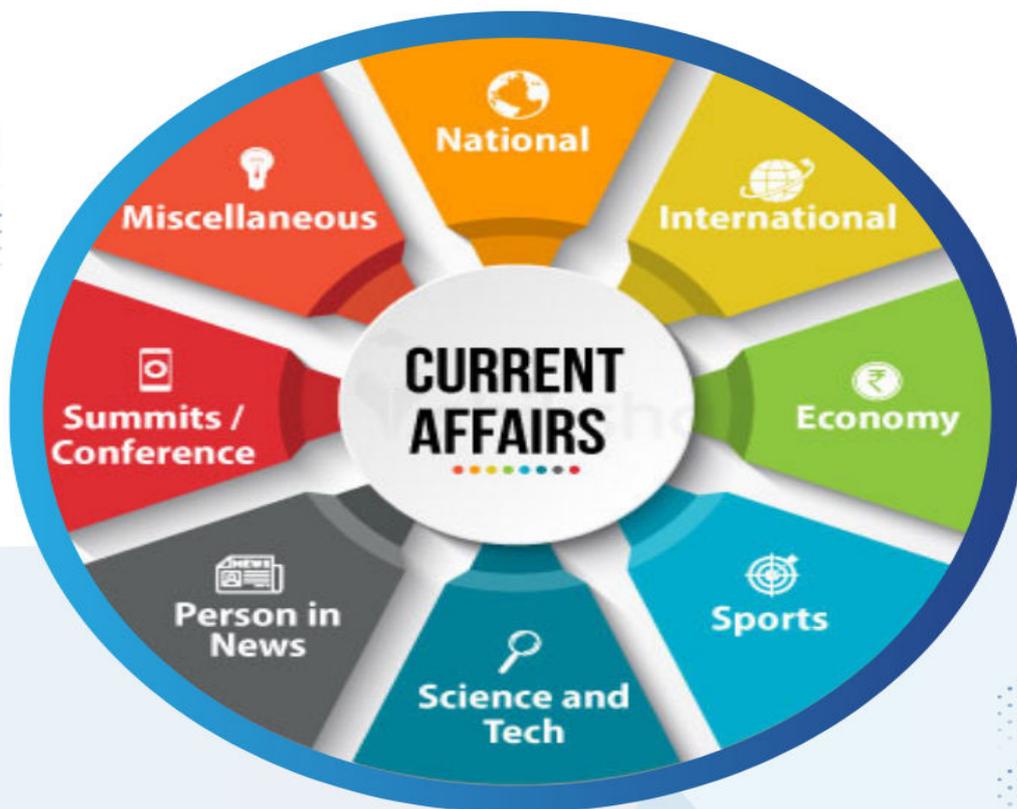
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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 16/10/2025 (THURSDAY)



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1. India's Trade Deficit Widens by 93% in September 2025 (Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry Data)

1. Overview of the Trade Deficit Trend

- India's **trade deficit** widened by **93% in September 2025**, reaching **\$16.6 billion** compared to **\$8.6 billion** in September 2024.
- Trade deficit** refers to the situation where a country's **imports exceed its exports**, leading to a negative balance of trade.
- Despite this monthly rise, the **overall trade deficit for April–September 2025** shrank by **2.3%**, indicating some stability in the first half of the financial year.

2. Export and Import Dynamics

- Total exports:** \$67.2 billion in September 2025, showing a marginal **increase of 0.8%** over September 2024.
- Total imports:** \$83.8 billion, registering a significant **rise of 11.3%**, outpacing exports.
- The surge in imports may reflect **higher oil prices, gold purchases, and demand for capital goods**, indicating domestic economic recovery or inflationary pressures.

Steady growth in exports



Merchandise and services exports together grew **4.45%** in April–September, outpacing import rise and narrowing the trade gap by **2.3%**

		April-September 2024-25 (US\$ Billion)	April-September 2025-26 (US\$ Billion)	Change in %
Merchandise	Exports	213.68	220.12	3.02
	Imports	358.85	375.11	4.53
Services*	Exports	182.03	193.18	6.12
	Imports	97.73	97.68	-0.05

*The latest data for services sector released by RBI is for August 2025. The data for September 2025 is an estimation

SOURCE: MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

3. Goods vs. Services Performance

- Goods exports** performed better, **growing 6.7% to \$36.4 billion**, despite U.S. tariffs of **50% on Indian imports**.
- Services exports**, however, **declined by 5.5% to \$30.8 billion**, dragging down overall export performance.
- Services—especially **IT, business process outsourcing (BPO), and consulting**—have traditionally been India's export strength, hence their fall is concerning for foreign exchange earnings.

4. India-U.S. Trade Relations

- India's **exports to the U.S.** were **13.4% higher** in the **April–September 2025** period compared to the previous year, but **monthly trends show a steady decline**.
- Exports fell from **\$8.8 billion in May 2025 to \$5.5 billion in September 2025**, likely due to **tariff barriers, global slowdown, and weaker demand** in the U.S. economy.
- The U.S. remains India's **largest trading partner**, making bilateral trade trends crucial for India's overall trade balance.

5. Broader Economic and Policy Implications

- The widening deficit may **pressure the rupee, impact forex reserves, and affect the current account balance (CAB)**.
- Policymakers may need to **diversify export markets, boost service competitiveness, and review tariff strategies** to maintain export momentum.



- The situation underscores the need for **export promotion policies** under frameworks like the **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023**, emphasizing **technology-driven sectors** and **value-added manufacturing**.

6. Constitutional & Legal Context

- **Foreign trade** falls under the **Union List (Entry 41)** in the **Seventh Schedule** of the Indian Constitution, giving the **Central Government exclusive powers** to regulate trade and commerce with foreign nations.
- Relevant legal provisions include:
 - **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992** – empowers the government to make trade policies.
 - **Customs Act, 1962** – governs import/export duties and tariff regulation.

Conclusion

The sharp widening of India's trade deficit in September 2025 reflects **structural imbalances** between imports and exports, particularly due to the decline in services exports. However, resilience in goods exports despite external challenges like U.S. tariffs is a positive sign. The government's focus should remain on **export diversification, enhancing service sector competitiveness, and managing import dependency** to ensure long-term external sector stability.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 3 (Indian Economy):** External Sector, Balance of Payments, Foreign Trade Policy.
- **GS Paper 2:** India–U.S. Economic Relations, WTO & tariff issues.
- **GS Paper 1 (Current Affairs Linkage):** Recent economic data interpretation.
- **Prelims:** Concepts like trade deficit, balance of payments, tariff, and service exports.

2. Police Destroy Nearly 10,000 Ganja Plants in Attappady, Kerala (Source: The Hindu, October 2025)

1. Overview of the Incident

- The **Kerala Police** conducted a major operation in **Attappady (Palakkad district)**, destroying nearly **10,000 ganja (cannabis) plants** cultivated illegally for **commercial purposes**.
- The plants, approximately **three months old**, were found spread over **60 cents of land** deep within the **Pudur forest area**.
- The raid is considered one of the **largest anti-ganja operations** ever carried out by the state police, showcasing intensified enforcement efforts against narcotic cultivation in forested tribal belts.



2. Agencies Involved in the Operation

- The operation was a **joint effort** of multiple enforcement wings:
 - **Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS)** – provided intelligence and operational support.



- **District Anti-Narcotics Special Action Force (DANSAF)** – handled eradication and destruction of crops.
- **Pudur Police Station Team** – provided local coordination and ground assistance.
- Such inter-agency coordination reflects the state's **integrated approach** to tackling organized drug cultivation and trafficking.

3. Legal & Constitutional Framework

- The action is governed under the **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985**, which:
 - Prohibits **cultivation, possession, sale, purchase, transport, and consumption** of narcotic substances.
 - Under **Section 8**, cultivation of cannabis without authorization is a **criminal offence**.
 - **Section 20** prescribes **rigorous imprisonment (up to 10 years)** and heavy fines for illegal cultivation.
- **Article 47** of the **Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy)** mandates the State to **raise the level of nutrition and standard of living** and **improve public health**, thereby discouraging the consumption of intoxicating drugs, except for medicinal purposes.

4. Broader Context: Drug Cultivation and Challenges

- Forest and hilly regions like **Attappady** have occasionally become **hotspots for illegal cannabis cultivation**, due to **inaccessible terrain, poor surveillance**, and **economic distress** among local communities.
- The **drug economy** often exploits vulnerable tribal areas, linking local cultivators to larger **inter-state narcotic networks**.
- The operation highlights the need for **community-based awareness, alternative livelihood programs**, and **technological surveillance (like drones and satellite imagery)** to curb such activities sustainably.

5. Policy and Administrative Measures

- The **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** and **State Anti-Narcotics Bureaus** have been coordinating for **crop mapping and monitoring** under the **National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR)**.
- The government also focuses on **rehabilitation, awareness campaigns**, and **supply-side reduction** through targeted policing and rural engagement.
- Courts have consistently upheld **strict enforcement of NDPS laws**, emphasizing deterrence and community responsibility in combating drug-related crimes.

6. Significance and Way Forward

- The destruction of such a large-scale illegal plantation is a **strong deterrent against organized drug cultivation**.
- However, long-term control requires combining **law enforcement with socio-economic measures**, particularly in **tribal and forest fringe areas**.



- Enhanced coordination among **Centre, State, and local agencies**, along with **data-based intelligence sharing**, is essential to make such efforts sustainable.

Conclusion

The large-scale ganja destruction in Attappady marks a significant step in Kerala's anti-narcotics drive. It underscores the growing emphasis on **law enforcement synergy, preventive monitoring, and community vigilance**. Yet, sustainable success depends on addressing the **root socio-economic vulnerabilities** that enable illicit cultivation. Strengthening **NDPS enforcement mechanisms** while promoting **inclusive development** in forest regions remains crucial for long-term narcotics control in India.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2:** Governance – Law enforcement and inter-agency coordination; Directive Principles (Article 47).
- **GS Paper 3:** Internal Security – Drug trafficking, Organized crime, and Border management.
- **GS Paper 4 (Ethics):** Public service responsibility, integrity in law enforcement.
- **Prelims:** NDPS Act, 1985 – Sections 8 & 20, Article 47 of the Constitution, Anti-Narcotics institutional framework (NCB, DANSAF, ATS).

3. Banana Cultivation in Andhra Pradesh – A Major Horticultural Crop in the Godavari Delta (Context: Farmer taking banana harvest to market near Athreyapuram, Ambedkar Konaseema District, Andhra Pradesh)

1. Overview of Banana Cultivation in Andhra Pradesh

- **Banana** is one of the most important **horticultural and commercial fruit crops** cultivated in Andhra Pradesh, especially in the **fertile Godavari delta region**.
- The **Ambedkar Konaseema district**, along with **East and West Godavari**, forms the key banana belt due to **alluvial soil, abundant irrigation, and favorable climate**.
- Andhra Pradesh ranks among the **top banana-producing states** in India, contributing significantly to the state's horticultural GDP and rural livelihoods.

2. Agronomic and Economic Significance

- The **Godavari delta**, nourished by the **Godavari River irrigation system**, provides fertile loamy soil and adequate moisture—ideal for banana cultivation.
- Major varieties include **Grand Naine (G-9), Robusta, Rasthali, Poovan, and Monthan**.
- Banana cultivation provides **high income per acre**, short gestation period (10–12 months), and **steady market demand** domestically and abroad.
- The crop supports **value chains in processing, packaging, and export**, contributing to rural employment and entrepreneurship.



3. Policy and Institutional Support



- Under the **National Horticulture Mission (NHM)** and **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)**, farmers receive assistance for **tissue culture plantlets, drip irrigation, and post-harvest infrastructure**.
- **Andhra Pradesh Micro Irrigation Project (APMIP)** promotes **water-efficient practices** in banana cultivation.
- The **Horticulture Department of Andhra Pradesh** and the **AP State Agri Marketing Board** provide support for **cold chain logistics, storage, and marketing linkages**.
- **AP Food Processing Policy 2020–25** also emphasizes **banana-based processing industries** for value addition and export promotion.

4. Legal and Constitutional Provisions

- **Agriculture and Horticulture** fall under the **State List (Entry 14, Seventh Schedule)**, giving states primary responsibility for policy formulation and implementation.
- The **Essential Commodities Act, 1955**, and the **Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Acts** govern the regulation of marketing and trade of perishable crops like bananas.
- The **Constitution (Article 48)** directs the State to organize agriculture on **modern and scientific lines**, supporting innovation in horticultural practices.

5. Challenges and Environmental Concerns

- Farmers face **market volatility, post-harvest losses (up to 20%), and price crashes** due to oversupply or poor logistics.
- Frequent **flooding and cyclones in the Godavari delta** affect crop yield and quality.
- **Pest infestations** (banana stem borer, sigatoka leaf spot) and **soil degradation** due to chemical inputs are growing concerns.
- The need for **climate-resilient varieties, better storage, and market diversification** is crucial for long-term sustainability.

6. Future Prospects and Sustainability Measures

- Adoption of **tissue culture propagation, drip irrigation, and organic inputs** can enhance productivity and resilience.
- Establishing **banana producer organizations (FPOs)** and linking them to **e-NAM (electronic National Agriculture Market)** can improve market access.
- Promotion of **banana fiber, chips, puree, and export-quality fruits** can diversify income sources.
- Integration with **agro-tourism and horticulture-based clusters** aligns with the **Doubling Farmers' Income vision and Sustainable Agriculture Goals (SDG-2)**.

Conclusion

Banana cultivation in the Godavari delta exemplifies how **fertile riverine ecosystems**, when combined with **scientific horticultural practices and institutional support**, can drive rural prosperity. Strengthening **value addition, export promotion, and climate adaptation** measures will be key to sustaining Andhra Pradesh's leadership in banana production and ensuring farmer income stability.

UPSC Relevance



- **GS Paper 3 (Economy & Agriculture):** Horticulture, Crop diversification, Agricultural marketing, and sustainable farming.
- **GS Paper 2:** Role of State in agriculture (Seventh Schedule, Article 48).
- **GS Paper 1 (Geography):** Riverine agriculture, soil types, and cropping patterns in deltaic regions.
- **Prelims:** National Horticulture Mission (NHM), Godavari delta agriculture, Banana-producing states, and varieties.

4. China Files WTO Complaint Against India Over EV and Battery Subsidies (Context: China's complaint to the World Trade Organization, October 2025)

1. Overview of the Issue

- **China has lodged a formal complaint against India at the World Trade Organization (WTO)** alleging that India's **electric vehicle (EV) and battery subsidy schemes** violate global trade rules by **discriminating against foreign manufacturers**.
- The complaint states that India's policies **favour domestic industries**, giving them an **unfair competitive advantage** in EV and battery manufacturing.
- China has declared it will take **"firm measures"** to safeguard the **legitimate rights and interests of its domestic industries**, indicating possible escalation of trade tensions between the two major Asian economies.

2. Background and Policy Context

- India has launched several schemes to promote its EV ecosystem under the **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME-II)** scheme, and the **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI)** schemes for **Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) batteries** and **Automobile & Auto Components**.
- These initiatives aim to **reduce dependence on oil imports, cut carbon emissions, and promote Make in India** by incentivizing **local manufacturing and value addition**.
- However, foreign countries—particularly China, which dominates the **global battery and EV supply chain**—perceive these incentives as **trade barriers** against imported products and foreign companies.

3. WTO Framework and Legal Dimensions

- The dispute will be examined under **WTO's Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures (ASCM)**, which prohibits subsidies that are **"contingent upon the use of domestic goods over imported goods."**
- China may argue that India's EV and battery policies **violate national treatment principles (Article III)** and **non-discrimination clauses** under the **General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) 1994**.
- India, however, can justify its measures under **Article XX (b) and (g)** of GATT, citing **environmental protection and energy security objectives** as legitimate grounds for such policies.





- The WTO's **Dispute Settlement Body (DSB)** will handle the complaint if consultations between the two nations fail to reach a resolution.

4. Strategic and Economic Implications for India

- The complaint highlights growing **geopolitical and trade friction** in the clean energy and technology sectors between India and China.
- India's EV and battery policies are critical for achieving its **Net Zero by 2070** goals and building **domestic technological capacity**.
- A WTO ruling against India could force policy changes, but a strong legal defence based on **environmental sustainability and developmental needs** could help India justify its approach.
- India may also receive support from other developing economies that advocate for **policy space to promote domestic green industries**.

5. Constitutional and Policy Provisions

- **Article 39(b) and (c)** (Directive Principles of State Policy) support **equitable distribution of resources** and prevention of **concentration of economic power**, aligning with India's push for self-reliant industrial development.
- **Article 253** empowers Parliament to **make laws for implementing international agreements**, such as those under the WTO framework.
- The **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992** gives the government authority to frame trade policies consistent with India's international obligations while protecting national interests.
- The **National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP)** and **PLI policies** reflect the constitutional vision of **sustainable development and technological self-reliance**.

6. Way Forward and Broader Perspective

- India needs to maintain a **balance between WTO compliance and industrial policy flexibility**.
- Strengthening **domestic R&D, technology transfer mechanisms, and bilateral trade dialogues** can mitigate potential disputes.
- Global discussions on **green subsidies and climate-linked trade policies** under the WTO should recognize the **differentiated responsibilities of developing nations** like India in transitioning to clean energy.
- India could also explore **plurilateral alliances** (like the Global South EV Consortium) to advocate fair rules for sustainable industrialization.

Conclusion

China's WTO complaint underscores the emerging **contest over clean technology dominance** and the **complex intersection of trade law and environmental policy**. While India's EV and battery subsidies aim to advance sustainable development and energy security, they also challenge established trade norms. A balanced approach—defending India's right to develop green industries while ensuring compliance with global commitments—will be key to preserving both economic and environmental objectives.

UPSC Relevance



- **GS Paper 2:** International Organizations – WTO dispute mechanisms; India-China relations; Foreign policy implications.
- **GS Paper 3:** Economy – Industrial policy, Subsidies, Make in India, Sustainable development, EV sector.
- **GS Paper 4:** Ethics – Balancing national interest with global trade commitments.
- **Prelims:** WTO-Dispute Settlement Body, FAME-II Scheme, PLI Scheme for ACC Batteries, ASCM Agreement provisions.

5. India's Unemployment Rate Rises Marginally to 5.2% in September 2025 (Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation)

1. Overview of the Data

- According to the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)**, India's **unemployment rate** for individuals aged **15 years and above** rose slightly to **5.2% in September 2025**, up from **5.1% in August 2025**.
- The increase was observed in both **rural and urban areas**, indicating a broad-based slowdown in job creation across sectors.
- **Rural unemployment** rose from **4.3% to 4.6%**, while **urban unemployment** increased from **6.7% to 6.8%** during the same period.
- Despite being a small rise, the data reflects **seasonal variations** in employment, particularly post-harvest or during industrial adjustments.

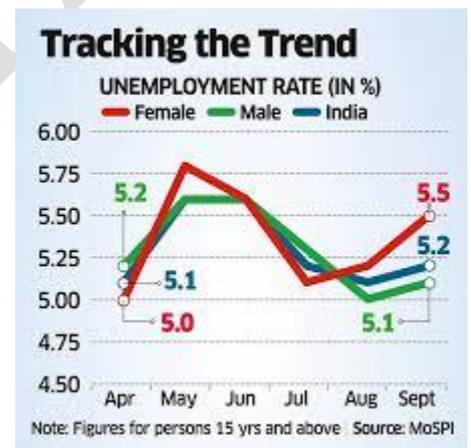
2. Understanding Key Terms

- **Unemployment Rate:** The percentage of people in the **labour force** who are willing and able to work but **cannot find employment**.
- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):** The proportion of the working-age population (15 years and above) that is either employed or actively seeking work.
- **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS):** Conducted by the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** since 2017, it provides quarterly and annual estimates of labour force indicators for both rural and urban areas.

3. Rural-Urban Employment Trends

- The rise in **rural unemployment** may be linked to **monsoon-related disruptions, agricultural off-seasons, or slowdown in rural non-farm activities**.
- In **urban areas**, the marginal increase may be attributed to **sluggish manufacturing recovery, informal job insecurity, and limited expansion in service sector hiring**.
- The persistent **urban-rural employment gap** highlights the structural imbalance in India's labour market, where non-farm job creation lags behind population growth.

4. Government Policies and Institutional Measures





- The government has initiated multiple programs to promote employment:
 - **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)** ensures 100 days of wage employment in rural areas.
 - **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)** promotes self-employment through micro-credit to entrepreneurs.
 - **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes** aim to boost manufacturing and create skilled jobs.
 - **Skill India Mission** and **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)** focus on enhancing employability of youth.
- Recent economic initiatives under **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan** also aim to strengthen domestic industries and promote job generation.

5. Constitutional and Legal Framework

- **Article 41** (Directive Principles of State Policy) directs the State to provide **right to work, education, and public assistance** in cases of unemployment.
- **Article 39 (a)** emphasizes that citizens should have the **right to adequate means of livelihood**.
- **MGNREGA (2005)** is a **statutory guarantee of employment** for rural households, representing the legal realization of the right to work.
- The **Code on Social Security, 2020** and **Code on Wages, 2019** seek to formalize employment and extend labour protections across sectors.

6. Broader Economic Implications and Way Forward

- Persistent unemployment, especially among **youth and educated population**, remains a structural concern for India's demographic dividend.
- The need is to **shift labour from low-productivity agriculture to manufacturing and modern services** through skill upgradation and investment in labour-intensive sectors.
- Promoting **MSMEs, digital economy, and green jobs** can help generate sustainable employment.
- Strengthening **labour market data, supporting women's workforce participation, and improving ease of doing business** are key to long-term employment stability.

Conclusion

The slight uptick in India's unemployment rate to 5.2% in September 2025 reflects ongoing challenges in ensuring equitable and consistent job creation across regions. While short-term factors such as seasonal and cyclical fluctuations play a role, the data underlines the need for **structural reforms, skilling, and industrial diversification** to fully realize India's demographic potential. Ensuring inclusive employment growth remains central to economic resilience and social stability.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** Employment trends, government schemes, PLFS, labour market reforms.
- **GS Paper 2:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections, role of government in human resource development.
- **GS Paper 1 (Society):** Demographic dividend, workforce participation, rural-urban divide.



- **Prelims:** PLFS methodology, MGNREGA provisions, constitutional articles on work and livelihood (Articles 39 & 41).

6. India Elected to the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) for the Seventh Time (Context: India's election to the UNHRC for the 2026–28 term, October 2025)

1. Overview of the Development

- India has been **elected to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)** for the **2026–2028 term**, marking its **seventh term** on the Geneva-based body.
- The election reflects **global confidence in India's democratic credentials**, constitutional commitment to human rights, and active role in multilateral diplomacy.
- India's three-year term will officially **begin on January 1, 2026**, as confirmed by the **UNHRC** and **India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations** in New York.
- **Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish**, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, expressed gratitude to member nations for their overwhelming support.

2. About the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)

- The UNHRC is a **47-member inter-governmental body** under the **UN General Assembly**, responsible for **promoting and protecting human rights globally**.
- It was **established in 2006**, replacing the former **UN Commission on Human Rights**.
- Members are **elected by the UN General Assembly** through a **direct and secret ballot**, based on **equitable geographical representation**.
- Each member serves a **three-year term** and cannot serve more than **two consecutive terms**.
- The UNHRC meets in **Geneva, Switzerland**, and operates under the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** mechanism to assess human rights situations in all member countries.



3. India's Role and Past Tenures

- India has previously served on the Council **six times** — reflecting its consistent engagement with global human rights institutions.
- India has advocated a **balanced approach to human rights**, emphasizing the principles of **universality, indivisibility, and non-selectivity**.
- It has worked to integrate **economic, social, and cultural rights** alongside **civil and political rights**, aligning with its constitutional and developmental framework.
- India has also highlighted issues like **gender equality, sustainable development, freedom of religion, and rights of developing nations** in global human rights discourse.

4. Constitutional and Legal Framework for Human Rights in India

- The **Indian Constitution** provides a robust foundation for human rights protection:



- **Fundamental Rights (Articles 12–35)** ensure equality, liberty, and protection from exploitation.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (Articles 36–51)** promote social and economic justice, reflecting India's commitment to human dignity.
- **Article 51(c)** directs the State to **foster respect for international law and treaty obligations**, including those related to human rights.
- The **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993** established the **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** and State Commissions to investigate rights violations and promote awareness.
- India is a signatory to major **UN human rights conventions**, including the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**, **ICCPR**, and **ICESCR**.

5. Diplomatic and Strategic Significance

- India's election reinforces its **soft power** and global image as the **world's largest democracy** committed to inclusive governance.
- It provides India a platform to **shape global human rights narratives**, especially around **digital rights, development-linked rights, and climate justice**.
- The position strengthens India's voice in countering **biased or politicized narratives** against its domestic policies.
- It aligns with India's broader **multilateral engagement strategy**, including its active roles in the **UN Security Council, UNESCO, and World Health Organization**.

6. Challenges and the Way Forward

- India faces the dual responsibility of **advocating human rights internationally** while ensuring **domestic implementation** and addressing criticism on issues like **freedom of expression or minority rights**.
- Strengthening **human rights education, institutional mechanisms (NHRC, SHRCs), and transparent redressal systems** will reinforce India's credibility.
- India can leverage its position to promote **Global South perspectives**, emphasizing **developmental rights, equitable digital access, and climate-linked displacement**.

Conclusion

India's election to the UNHRC for the 2026–28 term reaffirms its enduring commitment to the **protection and promotion of human rights at both national and international levels**. As a democracy guided by constitutional ideals, India's leadership at the Council offers an opportunity to advocate a **balanced, inclusive, and development-oriented human rights agenda** that upholds dignity, equality, and justice for all.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2:** International organizations and their mandates, India's foreign policy, global governance, human rights institutions.
- **GS Paper 3:** Human development, governance issues, inclusive growth.
- **GS Paper 4:** Ethics and Human Interface – Values in public administration, human dignity, and justice.



- **Prelims:** UNHRC formation, composition, Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.

7. India May Boost U.S. Energy Purchases — If Prices Are Competitive (Context: Bilateral trade negotiations and energy diplomacy between India and the U.S., October 2025)

1. Overview of the Issue

- India has indicated willingness to **increase crude oil and natural gas imports from the United States** if the prices are **commercially viable** for domestic refiners.
- The statement by **Union Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal** comes amid **ongoing bilateral trade agreement (BTA)** negotiations in Washington.
- The move follows **U.S. pressure on India** to reduce or halt its **discounted oil purchases from Russia**, which the U.S. claims indirectly supports Moscow's war efforts in Ukraine.
- Energy trade has emerged as a **key point of contention** in the Indo-U.S. trade talks, highlighting the intersection of **geopolitics, energy security, and trade diplomacy**.



2. India's Energy Import Profile and Dependence

- India imports around **85% of its crude oil needs** and **50% of its gas consumption**, making **energy import diversification** a strategic priority.
- The U.S. currently supplies about **\$12–13 billion worth** of crude oil and gas annually to India, with **potential headroom to double** these volumes.
- Russia became one of India's **top crude suppliers** after the Ukraine conflict, offering **discounted barrels** that helped stabilize domestic fuel prices.
- However, with the **narrowing price gap** between Russian and global crude, India's **economic incentive to continue Russian imports** is diminishing.

3. U.S. Pressure and Trade Negotiation Context

- The U.S. has linked progress on the **Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)** to India's **energy import choices**, asking for **written assurances** that New Delhi will **taper Russian oil imports** and **boost American purchases**.
- Reports indicate the U.S. may **impose an additional 25% tariff** on India's exports if it continues Russian oil imports, which would significantly **impact Indian exporters** already facing **50% tariff barriers**.
- U.S. officials argue that Indian and Chinese oil purchases have **helped sustain Russia's war economy**, while India defends its imports as **driven by energy affordability and national interest**.

4. Legal, Constitutional & Policy Dimensions

- **Energy security** falls under the **Union List (Entry 53, Seventh Schedule)**, empowering the Central Government to manage trade and supply of petroleum and gas.



- India's **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992** allows policy flexibility in trade negotiations to safeguard **strategic and economic interests**.
- The **Constitution (Article 51(c))** directs the State to **respect international law and treaty obligations**, balancing global commitments with sovereignty.
- **National Energy Policy (NEP)** and **Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP)** emphasize **diversified import sources** to ensure price stability and resilience.
- India's stance is also supported by **Article XX of GATT (1994)** under WTO rules, which allows trade measures for **national security and essential supply interests**.

5. Strategic & Geopolitical Implications

- India's calibrated approach aims to **balance relations** between the **U.S. and Russia**, both key partners in energy and defense.
- Increasing U.S. energy imports may **strengthen strategic ties** with Washington, especially in the context of **Indo-Pacific cooperation, QUAD energy initiatives, and clean technology collaboration**.
- However, excessive dependence on any one supplier could **undermine India's energy autonomy**.
- The evolving situation also underscores India's push toward **renewables and energy diversification**, consistent with its **Net Zero by 2070** target.

6. Way Forward and Economic Outlook

- India may seek to **expand long-term contracts with multiple suppliers**, balancing **economic viability with diplomatic considerations**.
- Strengthening **domestic refining capacity, strategic petroleum reserves, and LNG infrastructure** can enhance resilience.
- Bilateral energy cooperation with the U.S. could also focus on **green hydrogen, critical minerals, and clean energy technology transfer**, aligning with global sustainability goals.
- The eventual resolution will depend on whether the **U.S. offers competitive pricing and tariff concessions**, ensuring mutual economic benefit.

Conclusion

India's willingness to boost U.S. energy imports underscores a **pragmatic, interest-based approach to foreign policy and energy security**. While the U.S. pressure over Russian oil presents diplomatic challenges, India continues to prioritize **energy affordability, diversification, and sovereignty**. A balanced, price-sensitive energy partnership with the U.S. could strengthen trade relations while maintaining strategic autonomy — a cornerstone of India's foreign policy.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2:** India–U.S. relations, International trade agreements, Foreign policy and strategic autonomy.
- **GS Paper 3:** Energy security, External sector, Hydrocarbon policy, Sustainable energy transition.
- **GS Paper 1 (Current Affairs Linkage):** Global oil market trends, Ukraine war impacts on global energy.

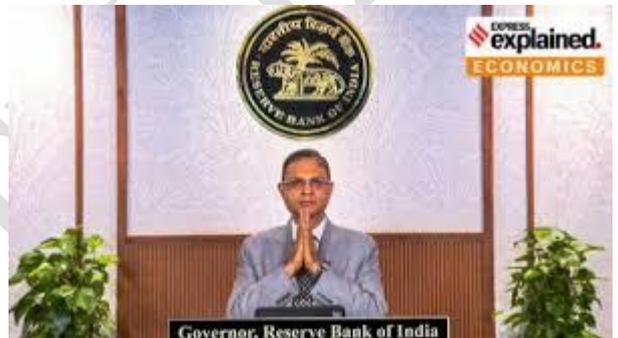


- **Prelims:** Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA), National Energy Policy, HELP framework, Article XX of GATT (WTO).

8. RBI Keeps Powder Dry for Future Rate Cuts – Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) Minutes Analysis (Context: RBI's cautious stance on monetary easing amid global and domestic uncertainties, October 2025)

1. Overview of the MPC Decision

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, in its latest **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** meeting, decided to **pause further repo rate cuts**, adopting a **wait-and-watch approach**.
- The minutes of the meeting indicate that the RBI is **keeping its policy “powder dry”**—a metaphor for **retaining monetary flexibility** for potential future actions if economic conditions worsen.
- Since February 2025, the MPC has already **reduced the repo rate by 100 basis points (bps)**, including a **surprise 50 bps cut in June 2025**, to support growth amid global trade and tariff uncertainties.
- The pause reflects the central bank's desire to **assess the impact of past policy measures**—including rate cuts and fiscal stimulus—before introducing further easing.



2. Understanding Key Terms

- **Repo Rate:** The rate at which the **RBI lends short-term funds** to commercial banks against government securities. Lowering the repo rate reduces borrowing costs, stimulating economic growth.
- **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):** A six-member body under **Section 45ZB of the RBI Act, 1934 (amended in 2016)**, responsible for setting the benchmark interest rate to achieve the **inflation target of 4% ± 2%**.
- **Transmission:** Refers to how effectively RBI's rate changes are passed on to the economy through changes in lending and deposit rates by commercial banks.

3. Key Arguments by MPC Members

- **Deputy Governor Poonam Gupta** stated that it is important to allow the effects of **recent GST rate cuts and earlier monetary easing** to manifest before initiating another rate reduction.
- **Executive Director Indranil Bhattacharyya** emphasized that given **heightened global uncertainty**, another rate cut may **not yield the intended stimulus**.
- **External Member Ram Singh** highlighted that **fiscal policy measures and previous monetary actions** are still in play, advocating patience.
- **Saugata Bhattacharya** observed that a **moderation in inflation** alone does not justify an immediate cut, as **growth–inflation dynamics** remain uncertain.
- **Nagesh Kumar** also supported waiting for **monetary transmission** to take full effect before further policy adjustments.

4. Policy Context and Economic Background



- The RBI's policy stance aligns with a **“cautious accommodative”** approach, ensuring **monetary stability** while being ready to act if growth weakens further.
- Global uncertainties—especially **U.S. tariff policies under Donald Trump's administration**—and domestic fiscal measures such as **GST cuts** and **government spending boosts** have influenced the RBI's cautious tone.
- India's **consumer inflation** remains within the RBI's comfort zone, while **growth indicators show gradual recovery**, justifying the temporary pause.
- The central bank aims to maintain a **balance between supporting growth and containing inflation expectations** amid evolving global conditions.

5. Legal and Institutional Framework

- The **RBI Act, 1934 (Amendment, 2016)** institutionalized the **MPC** to ensure transparency and accountability in monetary policy decisions.
- **Section 45ZL** mandates the **publication of MPC minutes**, enhancing public understanding of policy rationale.
- **Article 38 of the Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy)** directs the State to ensure the **welfare of the people** through economic justice, which includes maintaining **price stability and financial growth**.
- The **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003** works in tandem with monetary policy to ensure **macroeconomic discipline** and coordination between fiscal and monetary authorities.

6. Broader Implications and Way Forward

- The RBI's cautious approach reflects its **data-driven strategy**, prioritizing long-term stability over short-term populism.
- Allowing the impact of earlier policy actions to unfold is crucial to **avoid policy fatigue** and maintain credibility.
- The decision underscores the importance of **monetary-fiscal coordination**, particularly in a period of **global economic volatility** and uncertain trade dynamics.
- Future rate cuts may be considered if **growth momentum weakens** or **global conditions deteriorate**, but only after ensuring **inflation remains under control**.

Conclusion

The RBI's decision to hold off on further rate cuts while “keeping its powder dry” highlights a **prudent, forward-looking monetary policy approach**. By pausing to assess the effects of previous easing and fiscal stimuli, the central bank demonstrates its commitment to maintaining **macroeconomic stability amid global uncertainty**. The move reinforces the RBI's role as a **credible, independent monetary authority**, balancing growth and inflation management effectively.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 3 (Economy):** Monetary policy, Inflation targeting, Role of RBI, Fiscal-monetary coordination.
- **GS Paper 2:** Constitutional and institutional mechanisms for economic governance.



- **GS Paper 4 (Ethics):** Responsibility and prudence in policymaking.
- **Prelims:** MPC composition (6 members), RBI Act, 1934 – Section 45ZB, Repo Rate definition, FRBM Act basics.

9. The ‘Critical Factor’ in India’s Clean Energy Ambitions – Securing Critical Minerals for Sustainable Growth (Context: India’s strategy to ensure supply of lithium, cobalt, and rare earth elements (REEs) for its green transition and energy security)

1. Overview and Strategic Importance of Critical Minerals

- India’s aspiration to become a **global leader in clean energy** and achieve **500 GW of renewable energy by 2030** and **net zero emissions by 2070** hinges on securing **critical minerals** like **lithium, cobalt, nickel, and rare earth elements (REEs)**.
- These minerals are vital for **electric vehicles (EVs), solar panels, wind turbines, and energy storage systems**, making them the backbone of India’s **green technology ecosystem**.
- Currently, India depends heavily on **imports (nearly 100% for lithium and cobalt, and 90%+ for REEs)**, exposing the country to **geopolitical and supply chain vulnerabilities**, especially as **China controls 60% of global REE production and 85% of processing capacity**.
- Ensuring **secure, sustainable, and diversified mineral supply chains** is essential for achieving **Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)** in the clean energy race.



2. India’s Domestic Potential and Policy Framework

- India has **vast untapped mineral resources**, with **lithium deposits in Jammu & Kashmir and Rajasthan**, and **REE reserves in Odisha and Andhra Pradesh**.
- The **National Mineral Exploration Policy (NMEP), 2016** and the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act (MMDR), amended in 2021 and 2023**, promote private participation and use of advanced exploration technology.
- The **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** discovered **5.9 million tonnes of inferred lithium reserves in J&K (2023)**, marking a significant milestone in domestic exploration.
- Recent **auctions of 20 critical mineral blocks**, including lithium, graphite, and REEs, attracted strong interest from Indian and foreign investors, reflecting growing confidence in India’s mineral sector.

3. Institutional Mechanisms and Investment Initiatives

- The government has launched the **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)** with an investment of **₹34,300 crore**, focusing on exploration, mining, processing, and recovery of end-of-life materials.
- **Public sector enterprises (PSEs)** such as **NMDC** and **IREL (India) Ltd.** are diversifying into critical mineral extraction, while **KABIL (Khanij Bidesh India Ltd.)** is actively pursuing overseas acquisitions for strategic minerals.



- Despite progress, the **mining sector contributes only 2.5% to India's GDP** (compared to 13.6% in Australia), indicating the need for **regulatory reforms, faster licensing, and production-linked incentives** to attract private investment and technology partnerships.

4. Transition to a Circular Economy and Recycling Strategy

- Strengthening **recycling and recovery** is key to reducing import dependence. India generates **4 million tonnes of e-waste annually**, but only **10% is formally recycled**.
- The **E-Waste (Management) Rules, 2022** and **Battery Waste Management Rules, 2022** aim to enhance **critical mineral recovery** through **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**.
- Developing **advanced recycling hubs** and **urban mining initiatives** can recover valuable materials like lithium, cobalt, and nickel, reducing environmental degradation and promoting circularity.
- Public-private partnerships (PPPs) in **recycling technology** and **waste-to-resource initiatives** can build a resilient green supply chain and create jobs in the clean-tech ecosystem.

5. Legal and Constitutional Provisions

- Under the **Seventh Schedule (Union List, Entry 54)**, the **Union Government** holds powers over **mineral development and regulation**.
- The **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957** (as amended) and **National Mineral Policy, 2019** provide the statutory and strategic framework for sustainable mining and investment.
- **Article 48A** of the Constitution directs the State to protect and improve the environment, aligning with the principles of **sustainable resource utilization**.
- **Article 51(c)** obliges India to foster respect for international law, relevant to global commitments on **sustainable mining and climate action (Paris Agreement, 2015)**.

6. Challenges and Way Forward

- Challenges include **limited processing technology, regulatory hurdles, environmental clearances, and competition from mineral-rich nations**.
- To overcome these, India must:
 - Develop **domestic refining capacity** through PPPs.
 - Establish **strategic reserves** for critical minerals.
 - Integrate **research, innovation, and skill development** in mineral technology.
 - Strengthen **bilateral partnerships** (e.g., Australia, Argentina, Chile) for secure supply chains.
 - Promote **green mining practices** to balance environmental and industrial needs.

Conclusion

India's clean energy transition and industrial modernization depend on securing a **steady and sustainable supply of critical minerals**. While exploration, mining, and recycling reforms are underway, their success requires **policy coherence, investment incentives, global collaboration, and environmental safeguards**. A robust mineral ecosystem will not only drive India's **EV, solar, and battery storage goals**, but also position it as a **global leader in green growth and strategic self-reliance**.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 3 (Economy & Environment):** Resource mobilization, sustainable mining, energy security, circular economy.
- **GS Paper 2:** Government policies and international collaborations in energy and environment sectors.
- **GS Paper 1 (Geography):** Distribution of key minerals and resources in India and the world.
- **Prelims:** Critical minerals, REEs, National Mineral Exploration Policy (NMEP), National Critical Mineral Mission, E-Waste Rules 2022, MMDR Act 1957 & 2023 amendment, GSI lithium discovery in J&K.

10. Bengal Second-Lowest in Convictions for Crimes Against Women (2017–2023) (Context: Rising crimes and low conviction rates despite state claims of “zero tolerance”)

1. Overview of the Situation

- Between **2017 and 2023**, West Bengal reported persistently **low conviction rates for crimes against women**, averaging around **5%**, one of the **lowest in India**.
- In **2023**, West Bengal ranked **35th out of 36 States and Union Territories** in conviction rates for crimes against women, with only **8.9% of cases** resulting in convictions.
- Despite the Chief Minister’s assurances of “zero tolerance,” the State faces **rising public outrage** following repeated instances of sexual assault, such as the **Durgapur gang rape** and the **R.G. Kar Medical College case** in Kolkata.
- The data reveal a **deep systemic problem**—high crime incidence, rising acquittals, and mounting pendency of cases—indicating weaknesses in the **law enforcement and judicial process**.



2. Statistical Trends and Key Findings

- West Bengal has consistently reported **over 30,000 cases of crimes against women annually** since 2018, placing it among the **top four States** with the highest number of such cases.
- Between **2021 and 2023**, it recorded the **highest number of acid attacks and attempts to acid attack** in India.
- The State also ranked **second in attempted rape cases** and **third in cases of cruelty by husband or relatives**, after Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- The **number of acquittals** rose sharply from **8,000 in previous years to over 19,000 in 2023**, while **3.7 lakh cases** remained **pending trial** by the end of 2023 — a **56% increase** in pendency since 2017.
- Collectively, this reflects **poor investigation quality, prosecution failures, and delayed justice delivery**, undermining deterrence against gender-based crimes.

3. Legal and Institutional Framework



- Crimes against women are primarily governed by provisions under the **Indian Penal Code (IPC)** such as:
 - **Section 354** – Assault or use of criminal force on a woman with intent to outrage her modesty.
 - **Section 376** – Rape and sexual assault provisions.
 - **Section 498A** – Cruelty by husband or his relatives.
 - **Sections 326A & 326B** – Acid attack and attempt to acid attack.
- The **Criminal Law (Amendment) Acts of 2013 and 2018** strengthened punishment for sexual offences and introduced provisions for **fast-track courts**.
- The **Nirbhaya Fund (2013)** supports schemes for women's safety and justice delivery systems, including the **One Stop Centre Scheme** and **Women Helpline (181)**.
- The **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005)** and the **Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (2013)** further ensure gender justice and institutional accountability.

4. Constitutional Safeguards and Fundamental Rights

- **Article 14:** Guarantees equality before law and equal protection of laws.
- **Article 15(3):** Permits special provisions for women and children to ensure substantive equality.
- **Article 21:** Protects the right to life and personal liberty, interpreted by the Supreme Court to include **the right to live with dignity and free from violence**.
- **Directive Principles (Article 39A)** mandate the State to ensure **equal access to justice** and **free legal aid**, while **Article 42** provides for just and humane conditions of work for women.
- The State's failure to ensure justice and safety for women may amount to a **violation of fundamental and constitutional obligations**.

5. Reasons for Low Conviction and High Pendency

- **Poor investigation and evidence collection**, often due to inadequate training or lack of forensic support.
- **Delays in filing charge sheets** and **poor witness protection**, leading to hostile testimonies.
- **Overburdened judiciary** and insufficient number of **fast-track courts** for sexual offences.
- **Social stigma**, lack of victim support mechanisms, and **weak inter-agency coordination** (between police, prosecution, and judiciary).
- Insufficient **gender-sensitivity training** for law enforcement and **inconsistent implementation of victim compensation schemes**.

6. Way Forward and Policy Recommendations

- Strengthen **investigation and prosecution mechanisms** through digital case management and forensic capacity building.
- Increase the number of **fast-track courts** and **special public prosecutors** for women's crimes.



- Ensure **police accountability and gender-sensitivity training** to handle victims with care and professionalism.
- Expand the **One Stop Centre** and **Sakhi schemes** for immediate victim support.
- Institutionalize **state-level monitoring frameworks** to track pendency, conviction rates, and implementation of legal provisions.
- Promote **community awareness**, gender equality education, and collaboration with **civil society organizations** to combat societal biases.

Conclusion

The persistently low conviction rates and rising pendency of cases in West Bengal expose deep **institutional and systemic failures** in addressing crimes against women. While the State ranks among the highest in crime incidence, its justice delivery remains among the weakest. Strengthening the legal process, ensuring accountability, and prioritizing victim protection are essential to restore public trust and fulfill the **constitutional promise of equality, dignity, and justice for women**.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2:** Governance – Mechanisms for protection of vulnerable sections; Role of judiciary and institutions in justice delivery.
- **GS Paper 3:** Social issues – Internal security and criminal justice system reforms.
- **GS Paper 4 (Ethics):** Accountability, empathy in public service, and justice delivery.
- **Prelims:** IPC Sections 354, 376, 498A, Criminal Law (Amendment) Acts 2013 & 2018, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, Nirbhaya Fund initiatives.

11. India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC): Strategic Vision and Emerging Challenges (Context: India's diversification of global economic engagement and the evolving geopolitical realities in West Asia and Europe)

1. Overview and Strategic Significance of IMEC

- The **India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** is a visionary connectivity initiative launched on the sidelines of the **G20 Summit (2023, New Delhi)**. It aims to link **India, the Arabian Peninsula, and Europe** through **maritime and land-based corridors**.
- The project proposes to integrate **ports, railways, and digital infrastructure**, connecting **India to the UAE**, and further through **Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel's Haifa Port**, extending to **European markets**.
- IMEC includes plans for a **clean hydrogen pipeline, electricity and data cables**, and **upgraded port logistics**, making it an **economic and green technology corridor**.
- It is envisioned as a **strategic alternative** to China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, advancing **India's role in global trade networks** while fostering regional stability and sustainable growth.



2. Geopolitical Context and Historical Background



- The **Abraham Accords (2020)** improved Israel–Arab relations, creating a favorable environment for cooperation across West Asia. This led to multilateral frameworks like the **I2U2 Group (India–Israel–UAE–U.S.)**, which laid the foundation for IMEC.
- However, the **October 7, 2023 Hamas attacks** and the ensuing conflict between **Israel and Hamas** disrupted regional stability, raising doubts about the corridor’s feasibility.
- Despite these challenges, IMEC represents an attempt to **institutionalize peace through economic interdependence**, with India, the EU, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, and the UAE as key stakeholders.
- India’s growing ties with **UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Israel** position it as a trusted partner in bridging **Asian, Middle Eastern, and European markets**.

3. Economic and Strategic Relevance for India and Europe

- The IMEC offers India an **alternate trade route to Europe**, bypassing current chokepoints like the **Suez Canal** and reducing dependency on **maritime routes vulnerable to Red Sea and Persian Gulf disruptions**.
- It could strengthen India’s **energy and digital connectivity** with Europe and the Middle East, fostering **clean energy trade (hydrogen, renewables)** and **digital infrastructure cooperation**.
- For Europe—especially **Italy and Mediterranean nations**—the IMEC provides an opportunity to **counterbalance Arctic trade routes** that favor northern economies (U.S., Russia, China).
- The EU remains **India’s largest trade partner (over \$136 billion)**, and the IMEC could reinforce **supply chain resilience, logistical efficiency, and economic complementarity** between the two regions.

4. Legal and Institutional Frameworks Supporting IMEC

- The **Constitution of India (Article 51(c))** directs the State to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations, aligning with India’s role in multilateral connectivity initiatives.
- Under the **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992**, India is empowered to frame agreements for cross-border trade facilitation.
- The **Sagarmala Project (2015)** and **Maritime India Vision 2030** provide the domestic policy backbone for developing India’s **port-led growth and maritime logistics** capabilities.
- The **Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)**, a G7 initiative, underpins the IMEC as part of the **rules-based global connectivity framework**.
- Legally, the corridor reflects principles under **UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea)** for promoting secure and sustainable maritime trade.

5. Challenges and Adaptation Needs

- The **volatile security environment** in West Asia, particularly the **Israel–Hamas conflict**, threatens project stability and regional cooperation.
- **Geopolitical rivalries** and **infrastructure financing constraints** could delay implementation, requiring adaptive and multi-tiered diplomacy.
- The **Houthi disruptions in the Red Sea** and rerouting of trade via the **Cape of Good Hope** have increased shipping costs, underlining the urgency of alternate routes like IMEC.



- To ensure feasibility, India and its partners must incorporate **flexible route designs, security guarantees, and stakeholder inclusivity**, engaging key actors like **Egypt and Saudi Arabia's additional ports**.
- Strong **private sector participation, infrastructure financing, and technological partnerships** are essential to make IMEC commercially viable and geopolitically sustainable.

6. Way Forward and Strategic Outlook

- India should integrate IMEC within its broader “**Act West**” and “**Neighbourhood First**” policies to consolidate regional influence.
- Expanding the IMEC framework to include **energy cooperation, renewable technology, and logistics digitization** will enhance its strategic depth.
- Coordination between **India and Europe as economic bookends** of IMEC can foster **shared prosperity, connectivity, and innovation**.
- Robust India–EU collaboration on **trade, clean technology, and security of sea lanes** will ensure that IMEC becomes a pillar of **inclusive and sustainable globalization**.

Conclusion

The **India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** embodies India's strategic vision to create a **secure, diversified, and sustainable trade network** connecting Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Despite geopolitical volatility in West Asia, IMEC remains crucial for **reducing supply chain risks, enhancing maritime and digital connectivity**, and reinforcing India's status as a **global trade and logistics hub**. Its success will depend on **multilateral cooperation, adaptive diplomacy, and sustained investment** in infrastructure and innovation.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2:** International relations, India's foreign policy, regional groupings (IMEC, I2U2), global diplomacy.
- **GS Paper 3:** Infrastructure development, transport networks, energy security, and economic integration.
- **GS Paper 1 (Geography):** Trade routes, maritime geography, and regional connectivity.
- **Prelims:** IMEC initiative, Abraham Accords, I2U2 grouping, Sagarmala Project, Maritime India Vision 2030, PGII.