



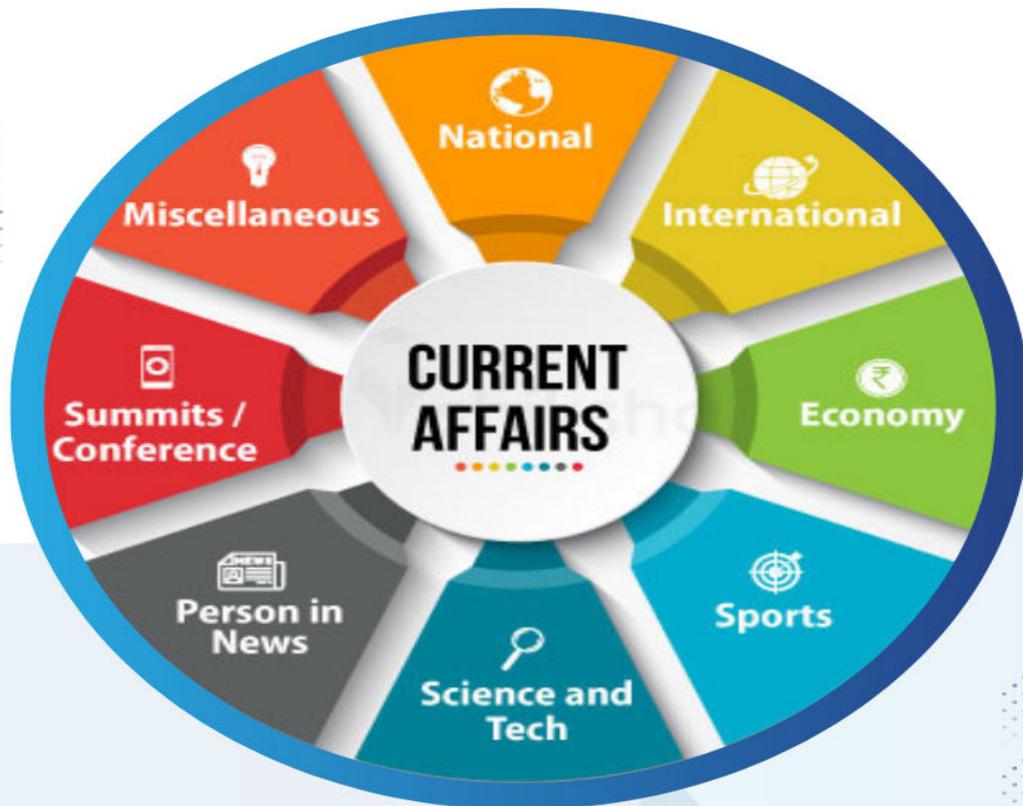
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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 17/10/2025 (FRIDAY)



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1. 100th Meeting of Network Planning Group under PM GatiShakti – Key Highlights and Summary

Summary for UPSC Civil Services Examination

- **Key Developments:**

- The 100th meeting of the **Network Planning Group (NPG)** under the **PM GatiShakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP)** evaluated **5 infrastructure projects** — **2 Railways, 2 Roads/Highways, and 1 Metro Rail** project.
- Focus areas included: **multimodal integration, logistics efficiency, last-mile connectivity, and the Whole-of-Government approach.**

- **Railway Projects:**

1. **Quadrupling of Hosapete–Ballari Line (Karnataka):**

- 65 km line to boost capacity in a **mineral-rich industrial belt** (iron ore, coal, steel, cement).
- Aims to decongest saturated double line and improve **freight and passenger movement.**
- Will enhance **connectivity to steel plants and power stations.**



2. **Doubling of Gondia–Jabalpur Line (Maharashtra & MP):**

- 230.5 km strategic rail project passing through 5 districts.
- Enhances logistics along the **Balharshah–Gondia–Jabalpur corridor**; facilitates coal, steel, and agri-commodity transport.
- Reduces bottlenecks and improves connectivity across **Central India.**

- **Road/Highway Projects (MoRTH):**

1. **Widening of Mahwa–Mandawar Section, NH-921 (Rajasthan):**

- Upgrades 50.2 km stretch for better connectivity to **Delhi NCR, Rajasthan, Haryana.**
- Enhances freight efficiency, road safety, and regional socio-economic development.

2. **Anisabad–Deedarganj Elevated Corridor (Patna, Bihar):**

- 13.37 km corridor with **6-lane elevated & at-grade road, service roads, LVUPs, and grade separators.**
- Aims to decongest urban Patna, support trade corridors, and improve access to industrial clusters.

- **Urban Metro Project (MoHUA):**

- **Jaipur Metro Phase-2 (Rajasthan):**

- 42.8 km North–South corridor with 36 stations (34 elevated, 2 underground).



- Connects Sitapura Industrial Area, SMS Hospital, and satellite towns like Chomu.
- Aligned with **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)** and **Jaipur Master Plan** for sustainable urban growth.

Additional Key Points:

- **PM GatiShakti:** Launched in Oct 2021, it is a **digital platform** integrating **16+ ministries** to plan and execute infrastructure projects with multimodal synergy.
- **Network Planning Group (NPG):** A key institutional mechanism under PM GatiShakti for evaluating inter-ministerial infrastructure proposals.
- **Multimodal Infrastructure:** Refers to integrated transport networks combining road, rail, air, and waterways to improve efficiency and reduce logistics costs.
- **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):** Urban planning strategy promoting **high-density, mixed-use development** near public transport nodes to reduce reliance on private vehicles.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions:

- **Article 39(b) & (c)** (Directive Principles): Promote distribution of resources for common good and prevent concentration of wealth.
- **Seventh Schedule – Union List:** Covers railways (entry 22), national highways (entry 23), and planning (entry 20) under central jurisdiction.
- **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)** and **Logistics Efficiency Enhancement Programme (LEEP)** complement GatiShakti efforts.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance:

The 100th NPG meeting underlines India's commitment to **integrated infrastructure planning, logistics optimization, and regional economic development**. With a focus on **seamless connectivity**, these projects align with national priorities like **Make in India, Ease of Doing Business, and urban transformation**. The GatiShakti framework marks a paradigm shift towards **data-driven, collaborative governance** in infrastructure.

UPSC Relevance:

- **Prelims:** Questions on schemes like **PM GatiShakti**, infrastructure initiatives, and related ministries.
- **Mains GS Paper II & III:** Topics on **Governance, Infrastructure, Inclusive Growth, Urbanization, and Intergovernmental Coordination**.
- **Essay:** Themes on **infrastructure as the backbone of development, or multimodal transport revolution in India**.

2. India's Ayush Diplomacy at Arctic Circle Assembly 2025 – Key Summary

Key Highlights for UPSC Civil Services Examination

- **India's Arctic Engagement through Ayush Diplomacy:**
 - At the **Arctic Circle Assembly 2025 in Reykjavik, Iceland**, India projected **Ayush systems (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy, Sowa-Rigpa)** as critical tools in global health resilience, especially in **extreme ecosystems like the Arctic**.



- The Indian delegation included **Prof. (Vaidya) Rabinarayan Acharya (DG, CCRAS)** and **Dr. Srinivas Rao Chinta (Ministry of Ayush)**, emphasizing India's vision to integrate **traditional medicine with polar research** and **global health diplomacy**.
- **Plenary on Global South's Role in the Arctic:**
 - In a session titled "*The Role and Importance of the Global South in the Arctic*", India highlighted:
 - Relevance of **traditional knowledge systems** in Arctic health contexts.
 - Proposal for **transdisciplinary clinical trials** and **Ayush-based wellness models** tailored to harsh Arctic conditions.
 - India's Arctic Policy goals of **sustainability, scientific cooperation, and inclusivity** with traditional health integration.
- **Proposed Collaborative Initiatives:**
 - **Joint research consortiums** under the Arctic Policy framework to bring together **Ayush researchers and polar scientists**.
 - **Clinical trials** to validate traditional interventions in cold climates.
 - **Capacity building** in cross-cultural health delivery and **safety surveillance** in Arctic communities.
 - Emphasis on **scientific documentation** of Ayush practices to enhance their **global credibility and integration**.
- **Diplomatic & Scientific Objectives:**
 - The initiative strengthens India's **science diplomacy** and **soft power** by linking traditional medicine with **climate-resilient health strategies**.
 - Supports India's role as a **knowledge partner** in the Arctic region and fosters **people-to-people connections** through holistic health initiatives.
 - Reflects alignment with **SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being)** and **SDG 13 (Climate Action)**.
- **Key Definitions:**
 - **Ayush:** Acronym for traditional Indian systems of medicine – Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Homoeopathy.
 - **Arctic Policy of India (2022):** Aims to strengthen India's presence and cooperation in the Arctic through science, environmental protection, climate change mitigation, and international collaboration.
- **Constitutional and Legal Provisions:**
 - **Article 51(c):** Promotes international peace and cooperation – aligns with India's Arctic outreach.





- **Article 47:** Duty of the state to improve public health – justifies international promotion of Ayush systems.
- Ministry of Ayush established under **Government of India (2014)** to promote traditional systems of medicine and wellness research globally.

Conclusion:

India's representation at the Arctic Circle Assembly 2025 reflects a **strategic blend of diplomacy, traditional medicine, and scientific innovation**. By advocating for Ayush integration in Arctic health systems, India showcases its ability to offer **contextual wellness solutions** that are culturally rooted and globally relevant. This initiative not only expands India's **geopolitical and scientific influence in the Arctic** but also enhances the credibility of **Ayush in global health policy frameworks**.

UPSC Relevance:

- **Prelims:** Schemes and initiatives of the **Ministry of Ayush, India's Arctic Policy**, International organizations/events like Arctic Circle Assembly.
- **Mains GS Paper II & III:** Topics on **Health, International Relations, Science & Technology, Soft Power Diplomacy, and Traditional Knowledge Systems**.
- **Essay:** Topics on *“Traditional knowledge in global health”* or *“India's soft power in a multipolar world”*.
- **Interview:** Could be asked about the role of Ayush in foreign policy, its scientific relevance, or India's presence in the Arctic region.

3. Russia Offers Support for India's AMCA & Local Production of Su-57 – Key Highlights

- **Russia's Strategic Offer to India's AMCA Programme:**
 - Russia has expressed readiness to support India's **Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA)** programme, a fifth-generation fighter aircraft project being developed by **DRDO** and **HAL**.
 - Russian Ambassador Denis Alipov offered **local production of the Su-57**, Russia's fifth-generation stealth fighter jet, as part of a broader collaboration, reinforcing the **India-Russia defence partnership**.
 - This proposal is significant as AMCA is India's first **indigenously designed stealth aircraft**, aligning with the vision of **Atmanirbhar Bharat in defence**.
- **Evolution of India-Russia Defence Ties:**
 - The offer highlights a shift from a **buyer-seller model** to **joint development, co-production, and technology sharing**, marking deepening strategic ties.
 - Historical collaborations include **BrahMos missile, INS Vikramaditya, and Sukhoi Su-30MKI** co-production.





- Russia remains one of India's largest defence partners, despite India's growing diversification in sourcing arms.
- **Su-57 and AMCA – Strategic Context:**
 - **Su-57:** Russia's fifth-generation stealth multirole fighter known for **supercruise capability, stealth, advanced avionics, and high maneuverability.**
 - **AMCA:** India's indigenous 5th-generation fighter program, aimed at replacing ageing fleets and enhancing **air superiority** with stealth and indigenous weapon systems.
 - Collaboration may accelerate AMCA development through **technology transfer, R&D synergy, and industrial ecosystem building.**
- **Geopolitical and Energy Context:**
 - The announcement comes amid Western speculation (including from former U.S. President Donald Trump) about India's potential halt in **Russian oil imports** due to geopolitical pressures.
 - Russia reaffirmed its importance as a **cost-effective energy supplier**, underlining the strategic balancing India exercises in its **foreign policy and energy security.**
- **Key Definitions and Concepts:**
 - **Fifth-Generation Fighter Aircraft:** Aircraft with stealth capabilities, advanced avionics, integrated sensors, and multirole combat functionality.
 - **Atmanirbhar Bharat in Defence:** Government initiative promoting indigenous design, development, and manufacturing of defence equipment to reduce import dependency.
- **Constitutional and Legal Provisions:**
 - **Article 51(d):** Encourages development of **just and honorable relations** between nations—relevant in the context of strategic defence cooperation.
 - **Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) and Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP 2020):** Emphasize indigenization and promote **Make in India** in defence.

Conclusion:

The Russian proposal to support AMCA and manufacture Su-57 in India reflects a **strategic convergence in defence**, with implications for India's technological advancement, air power, and self-reliance. It also reaffirms the strength of the **India-Russia strategic partnership** amid changing global power equations and evolving security dynamics.

UPSC Relevance:

- **Prelims:** Defence platforms (Su-57, AMCA), organisations (DRDO, HAL), DAP 2020.
- **Mains GS Paper II & III:** Topics on **International Relations, India-Russia ties, Indigenization of Defence Technology, Strategic Autonomy.**
- **Essay:** Topics such as *“Strategic Autonomy in the Age of Alliances”* or *“Defence Self-Reliance as a Pillar of National Security”*.
- **Interview:** May be asked about 5th-gen fighter aircrafts, India's defence diplomacy, or implications of defence ties with Russia amidst global tensions.



4. India–U.S. Differences over Russian Oil Imports

1. Background and Context

The recent disagreement between U.S. President Donald Trump and India’s Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) centers on the issue of India’s oil imports from Russia. Trump claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured him India would soon stop buying Russian oil. However, the MEA denied any such discussion, emphasizing that India follows an independent energy policy based on national interest and market needs.

2. India’s Energy Policy and Strategic Autonomy

India has consistently maintained that its energy imports are guided by “**strategic autonomy**”—the freedom to pursue national interests without external pressure. The MEA stated that India is “*broad-basing and diversifying*” its energy sources, implying a gradual shift toward alternative suppliers rather than an abrupt halt to Russian oil. This reflects India’s effort to balance diplomatic relations with both the West and Russia amid geopolitical tensions.

3. Bone of Contention in India–U.S. Relations

Russian oil imports have become a **major friction point** in India–U.S. relations. The U.S. has imposed **penalty tariffs** on certain Indian goods, allegedly in response to India’s continued energy dealings with Russia. Moreover, these tensions are believed to be delaying bilateral **trade negotiations**. Despite U.S. pressure, India remains cautious about completely ending Russian oil imports due to cost advantages and long-standing energy ties.



4. Data and Recent Trends

According to data analyzed by *The Hindu*, Indian public sector oil companies reduced Russian oil imports by about **45% between June and September** of the current year. Nonetheless, Russia remains India’s **largest crude oil supplier**, indicating a pragmatic rather than a political recalibration of energy sources. This data underscores India’s gradual diversification rather than compliance under pressure.

5. Constitutional and Legal Provisions Related

Under **Article 73** of the Indian Constitution, the Union Government has the executive power to enter into treaties and manage external affairs, including trade and energy diplomacy. Additionally, **Article 51(c)** promotes respect for international law and treaty obligations, providing constitutional backing for balancing foreign policy with domestic needs. The **Petroleum & Natural Gas Regulatory Board Act (2006)** empowers the government to ensure energy security and supply diversification in the national interest.

6. Broader Implications and Geopolitical Significance

The issue reflects larger global geopolitical alignments amid the **Russia–Ukraine conflict**, where Western nations are pressuring allies to isolate Russia economically. India’s stance exemplifies its pursuit of “**multi-alignment**”—engaging simultaneously with diverse global partners to protect strategic and economic interests.

Conclusion

The ongoing India–U.S. divergence over Russian oil imports underscores the delicate balance between **economic pragmatism** and **geopolitical diplomacy**. While the U.S. expects alignment on sanctions, India prioritizes energy security and affordability for its population. By broad-basing its energy imports, India signals an adaptive yet sovereign foreign policy stance.

UPSC Relevance



- **GS Paper 2:** India's foreign policy, bilateral relations (India–U.S., India–Russia), international organizations, and global energy diplomacy.
- **GS Paper 3:** Energy security, economic diversification, and international trade dynamics.
- **Key Concepts:** Strategic autonomy, energy diversification, sanction diplomacy, trade friction, and multi-alignment policy.

5. Supreme Court Refuses to Lift Telangana HC Stay on 42% OBC Quota in Local Body Polls

1. Background and Context

The Supreme Court of India declined to interfere with the **Telangana High Court's stay** on two Government Orders that sought to increase the **Other Backward Classes (OBC)** reservation in **municipalities and panchayats** to **42%**. The Telangana government had appealed against the High Court's interim order dated **October 9**, but the Supreme Court upheld the stay, allowing local body elections to continue under the existing quota structure.

2. Constitutional and Judicial Framework on Reservation Limits

The Supreme Court's decision relied on **Constitution Bench precedents**, particularly the **Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992)** judgment, which established a **50% ceiling on total reservations** in public employment and education. This principle was reaffirmed in **K. Krishna Murthy v. Union of India (2010)**, where the Court held that even in **local body elections**, reservations for OBCs must not exceed the 50% limit unless backed by strong empirical data justifying the excess. The Telangana government's attempt to enhance OBC quota to 42% would have breached this ceiling when combined with SC and ST reservations.



3. Key Constitutional Provisions Involved

- **Article 243D & 243T:** Provide for reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and women in Panchayats and Municipalities.
- **Article 15(4) & 16(4):** Empower the State to make special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes.
- **Article 340:** Permits the appointment of a commission to investigate conditions of backward classes. However, these provisions are subject to **constitutional limits and judicial interpretations** ensuring equality and non-discrimination under **Article 14**.

4. Supreme Court's Observations

The **Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta** observed that it could not pass any order inconsistent with existing Constitution Bench rulings. The Court clarified that while the **elections may proceed**, they must do so **without the proposed 42% OBC hike**, thus preserving the legal sanctity of the 50% reservation ceiling. The Court also directed that the High Court would continue to hear and decide the matter **on its merits**.

5. Broader Legal and Political Implications

This case underscores the continuing tension between **social justice** and **constitutional limitations**. States often seek to expand quotas for political and welfare considerations, but the judiciary has consistently



upheld the **50% cap** as a safeguard against excessive compartmentalization in governance. The decision also highlights the importance of **empirical data** and **backwardness studies** before increasing quotas, as mandated by the Supreme Court in **K. Krishna Murthy (2010)** and later reaffirmed in **Vikas Kishanrao Gawali v. State of Maharashtra (2021)**.

6. Definition of Key Term

Other Backward Classes (OBCs): Socially and educationally disadvantaged groups identified by the government as requiring affirmative action through reservations in education, employment, and political representation.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's refusal to lift the stay on the 42% OBC quota in Telangana reaffirms the **constitutional balance between affirmative action and equality**. It reiterates that any deviation from the **50% ceiling** must be justified through rigorous data and legal procedure. The ruling strengthens judicial oversight over state-level reservation policies and reinforces the need for evidence-based policymaking.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2: Polity and Governance** – Constitutional provisions related to reservations, judicial review, and local governance.
- **GS Paper 1 (Society):** Issues related to social empowerment, inequality, and affirmative action.
- **Key Concepts:** 50% reservation ceiling, judicial limits on affirmative action, empirical data in policy formulation, OBC representation in governance.

6. Delhi Government's 25-Point Winter Action Plan and Persistent Poor Air Quality

1. Background and Context

The **Delhi government** has launched a **25-point Winter Action Plan** to address the annual rise in air pollution during the winter months. Despite this, the city's **Air Quality Index (AQI)** remained in the *'poor'* category for the third consecutive day, recording **245** as per the official bulletin. The initiative reflects an ongoing struggle to curb particulate pollution, which typically worsens due to stubble burning, vehicular emissions, and stagnant weather conditions.

2. Key Measures under the Winter Action Plan

The plan focuses on **dust suppression, vehicular emission control, and waste management**. The measures include deployment of **86 mechanical sweepers, 300 water sprinklers, and 362 anti-smog guns**, with procurement underway for **70 more sweepers**. Around **443 teams** patrol against garbage and biomass burning, while **578 teams** monitor vehicular pollution and verify **Pollution Under Control (PUC)** certificates. Roads are vacuum-swept and monitored through **GPS tracking systems** to ensure compliance. The Minister emphasized that "compliance will be non-negotiable" this winter.



3. Constitutional and Legal Framework

The government's actions are guided by several constitutional and legal mandates:

- **Article 48A (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Obliges the State to protect and improve the environment.
- **Article 51A(g):** Imposes a fundamental duty on citizens to protect the natural environment.



- **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981:** Provides statutory authority to control and reduce air pollution.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Empowers the government to implement programs and issue directions for environmental protection. Additionally, the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** and **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)** play crucial supervisory roles in enforcing air quality standards in the National Capital Region (NCR).

4. Current Air Quality Status and Challenges

Delhi's AQI reading of **245** places it in the '*poor*' category (201–300), indicating a significant health concern for sensitive groups. The persistence of poor air quality despite action plans points to **systemic implementation gaps**, cross-border factors like **stubble burning in Punjab and Haryana**, and **urban vehicular congestion**. Political blame-trading further complicates accountability and inter-state coordination.

5. Definition and Broader Environmental Implications

Air Quality Index (AQI): A numerical scale (0–500) used to communicate how polluted the air currently is or how polluted it is forecast to become. Categories range from 'good' (0–50) to 'severe' (401–500). Persistent 'poor' AQI levels can lead to respiratory illnesses, reduced visibility, and climate impacts, demanding stronger regional and national-level intervention.

Conclusion

Delhi's Winter Action Plan demonstrates administrative intent, but its efficacy depends on **strict enforcement, inter-state coordination, and public compliance**. Technological monitoring and data-driven policymaking are critical to addressing urban air pollution sustainably. The issue underscores the need for **cooperative federalism** in environmental governance.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 3:** Environment and Ecology – Pollution control measures, environmental legislation, urban governance.
- **GS Paper 2:** Government policies and their implementation, inter-state relations, and cooperative federalism.
- **Key Concepts:** Air Quality Index (AQI), Air Pollution Control Acts, NGT, CAQM, environmental governance.

7. Debating the Real Architect of the Indian Constitution – B.N. Rau vs. B.R. Ambedkar

1. Background and Emerging Revisionism

A quiet revisionism in India's constitutional history is seeking to **elevate Sir Benegal Narsing Rau**, the Constitutional Adviser to the Constituent Assembly, as the "*real architect*" of the Constitution — diminishing **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's role** to that of a mere editor or compiler. This narrative, though presented as academic, carries deep political and social implications. It seeks to undermine **Dalit agency** and the transformative moral leadership Ambedkar brought to the Constitution's making.





2. Distinction in Roles – Complementary, Not Competing

Sir B.N. Rau's contribution was **technical and preparatory**, not political or representative. Appointed in **July 1946**, he prepared a "*rough draft*" of 243 Articles and 13 Schedules based on comparative constitutional studies of the U.S., U.K., Ireland, Australia, and Weimar Germany. His work served as a **reference document** for the Drafting Committee.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, as **Chairman of the Drafting Committee**, carried the draft through political turbulence — **Partition, Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, and communal divisions**. His task was to turn a technical text into a **political covenant**, ensuring consensus and embedding **justice, equality, and liberty** into the document. Rau built the framework; Ambedkar infused it with *moral and social philosophy*.

3. Constitutional and Legal Context

Ambedkar's leadership shaped the **Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy, and provisions for affirmative action**, forming the moral and philosophical core of the Constitution. His warnings on **social and economic inequality** remain central to constitutional discourse. His words — "*We must remove this contradiction at the earliest possible moment, or those who suffer from inequality will blow up the structure of political democracy*" — highlight the enduring link between **social justice and democratic survival**.

Legally, while **Rau operated under executive authority**, Ambedkar derived legitimacy from **Article 392 of the Draft Constitution** (transitory powers) and the **Constituent Assembly's mandate**, giving his role both democratic and constitutional weight.

4. Political and Historical Significance of Inclusion

Ambedkar's presence in the Constituent Assembly was secured through **Mahatma Gandhi's insistence**, after Partition displaced his Bengal seat. Gandhi believed that **no Constitution could claim legitimacy if Scheduled Castes were excluded**. This inclusion transformed the making of the Constitution into a **moral and inclusive national project**, integrating the aspirations of the oppressed. Ambedkar's speeches and interventions made the Constitution a **living document of social transformation**, not a mere legal charter.

5. The Attempt to Recast History and Its Implications

The current effort to crown Rau as the "Father of the Constitution" is less about scholarship and more about **reclaiming authorship for caste privilege**. It attempts to depoliticize and bureaucratize the Constitution, reducing it from a **revolutionary social manifesto** to a mere legal text. While Rau deserves respect as a **constitutional engineer**, Ambedkar remains the **moral architect** whose vision gave the Constitution its enduring spirit of **equality, fraternity, and justice**.

Definition of Key Term

Constitutional Morality: A concept emphasized by Dr. Ambedkar referring to adherence to the core principles and spirit of the Constitution — liberty, equality, and fraternity — over political expediency or social prejudice.

Conclusion

The Constitution of India is both a legal and moral document — **Rau's scholarship provided its structure**, but **Ambedkar's leadership gave it soul and legitimacy**. The attempt to diminish Ambedkar's role distorts historical truth and undermines the Republic's foundational values. The Indian Constitution remains a product of both intellect and moral conviction, and Ambedkar stands as its **true architect and conscience-keeper**.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 1:** Modern Indian History – Freedom struggle, leaders, and their contributions.



- **GS Paper 2:** Indian Constitution – Historical underpinnings, makers of the Constitution, and salient features.
- **Ethics (GS Paper 4):** Leadership, moral conviction, and integrity in public life.
- **Key Concepts:** Constitutional morality, social justice, affirmative action, democratic legitimacy.

8. Balancing Growth and Climate Justice – Safeguards for India’s Carbon Market

1. Background and Context: Rethinking Growth Models

The traditional **growth-driven development model**, rooted in the Industrial Revolution, has crossed **planetary boundaries**, causing severe ecological damage. While some advocate for “**degrowth**” — reducing overall economic activity to protect the planet — this approach is neither **feasible nor equitable** for developing countries like India that still face poverty and hunger. The sustainable alternative lies in “**decoupling growth from environmental harm**”, i.e., achieving economic progress through **cleaner technologies, renewable energy, and sustainable farming practices**. India’s rapid growth in **solar energy and micro-irrigation** demonstrates this possibility.

2. Carbon Credits: Definition and Mechanism

A **carbon credit** is a certified reduction or removal of **greenhouse gas emissions**, quantified as one tonne of **carbon dioxide (CO₂) equivalent**. These credits are generated from **renewable energy projects, reforestation, or agricultural sequestration**, and can be traded to help companies offset their emissions. India’s **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)** aims to establish a **regulated carbon market** with emission-intensity benchmarks for major sectors and a **national registry** for transparent trading. Draft methodologies have been introduced for biomass, compressed biogas, and low-emission rice cultivation, reflecting India’s early steps toward a structured carbon economy.



3. Global and Indian Experiences: Lessons and Challenges

Globally, **carbon markets** are expanding rapidly, with around **175–180 million credits retired annually**, mostly from renewable energy and nature-based projects. However, **agriculture-based carbon projects** remain limited, especially in India, where only **4 out of 64 listed agricultural projects** under the Verra standard are fully registered. Studies attribute this to weak **farmer engagement, lack of training**, and poor inclusion of **marginalized communities** such as smallholders and lower-caste farmers. Without inclusive participation, the benefits of carbon markets risk bypassing those most affected by climate change.

4. Risks of Exploitation: Lessons from Kenya’s Carbon Projects

The **Northern Kenya Rangelands Carbon Project** and **Lake Turkana Wind Power Project** reveal how poorly designed carbon initiatives can **replicate colonial-style resource control**. These projects, while framed as community-led, faced allegations of **bypassing consent, weakening land rights**, and enforcing top-down restrictions. The absence of **Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)** and **transparent benefit-sharing** turned them into “**modern plantations**.” India faces similar risks, especially in **afforestation and reforestation projects** that affect village commons, forest fringes, and grazing lands. If not carefully regulated, carbon markets could **displace rural communities** under the guise of environmental protection.

5. Legal and Institutional Framework in India

India’s **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)** is guided by the **Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022**, which empowers the government to establish a national carbon market. However, the current



framework emphasizes **procedural compliance** over **equity and rights protection**. There is little mention of:

- **Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)** for affected communities.
- **Fair benefit-sharing mechanisms** for farmers and tribal populations.
- **Protection of customary land rights**, often governed by state and local laws (e.g., **Forest Rights Act, 2006**).

To ensure justice, India needs a **balanced regulatory approach** — strong on **transparency, accountability, and rights protection**, but flexible enough to encourage private and community participation.

6. The Way Forward: Building a Just Carbon Market

Overregulation could stifle innovation, but weak oversight risks exploitation. India must aim for **“light but right” regulation**, emphasizing:

- Transparent disclosure of benefit-sharing arrangements.
- Community participation through local governance institutions.
- Integration of **Article 48A** (environmental protection) and **Article 51A(g)** (citizens’ duty to safeguard nature) with **Directive Principles of State Policy**.
- Collaboration between **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**, **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**, and **local Panchayati Raj institutions** for oversight.

Definition of Key Term

Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC): A principle recognized in international law (UNDRIP) ensuring that communities give voluntary, informed approval before any project affecting their land, resources, or rights is implemented.

Conclusion

India’s carbon market offers immense potential for **climate mitigation and rural income generation**, but it must not repeat the **extractive models** of the past. By embedding **social safeguards, land rights, and community ownership**, India can pioneer a **decarbonized yet inclusive development pathway** — one that ensures **climate justice alongside economic growth**.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 3:** Environment and Ecology – Climate change, carbon markets, sustainable development.
- **GS Paper 2:** Governance – Policy formulation, rights of vulnerable groups, and environmental justice.
- **GS Paper 1:** Social empowerment and equitable development.
- **Key Concepts:** Carbon credits, FPIC, energy transition, sustainable development, environmental ethics.

9. Is Landlockedness the Reason for Bihar’s Underdevelopment?

1. Background and Context: Revisiting Bihar’s Development Paradox

Bihar remains one of India’s most **underdeveloped States**, often debated during elections with issues of industrial stagnation, migration, and poverty at the forefront. A recurring question is whether Bihar’s **landlocked geography**—its lack of direct access to ports—has constrained its economic progress. However,



discouraged industries from locating near resource-rich eastern states (like Bihar and Odisha), leading to regional disparities.

6. Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 38 & 39 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Mandate the State to promote equitable economic development and reduce regional inequalities.
- **Finance Commission (Article 280):** Ensures resource transfer from the Centre to backward states like Bihar to promote balanced growth.
- **Article 246 & Seventh Schedule:** Define Centre-State fiscal responsibilities, influencing how development funding is allocated.
- **NITI Aayog** also plays a key role in promoting **cooperative federalism** and addressing inter-state disparities.

Conclusion

Bihar's underdevelopment cannot be simplistically attributed to **landlocked geography**. It is a consequence of **historical policy distortions, governance deficits, weak state capacity, and delayed industrial transition**. Geography may influence logistics, but not destiny—**human capital, institutional reform, and infrastructure investment** will determine Bihar's future trajectory. A blend of **agricultural modernisation, industrial diversification, and fiscal accountability** is crucial for Bihar to break free from its developmental stagnation.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 1:** Indian Economy – Regional disparities, agricultural and industrial development.
- **GS Paper 2:** Governance – Centre-State relations, Finance Commission, federal fiscal transfers.
- **GS Paper 3:** Inclusive growth and economic development models.
- **Key Concepts:** Landlocked development challenges, freight equalisation policy, state capacity, structural transformation.

10. Restoring Fiscal Space for States – Post-GST Restructuring and Federal Fiscal Balance

1. Background and Context: End of GST Compensation and Fiscal Transition

India's **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** regime has entered a new phase with the **restructuring of tax slabs** and the **merger of the GST compensation cess with regular tax**, marking the formal **end of the compensation era**. This restructuring, estimated to pass on benefits exceeding ₹2 lakh crore to consumers, is expected to **boost local demand and revenue growth**. However, several States have raised concerns over the **absence of a clear estimation of potential revenue losses**, arguing that the removal of compensation mechanisms could erode their **fiscal autonomy and financial stability**, especially for those heavily reliant on GST transfers.

2. Constitutional Framework and Evolution of Fiscal Federalism

India's **federal fiscal structure** is constitutionally defined under:

- **Article 246:** Distribution of legislative and taxation powers between the Union and States.
- **Article 246A (101st Amendment, 2016):** Introduced GST, allowing concurrent taxation powers on goods and services.



- **Articles 268–293:** Outline Centre-State financial relations.
- **Article 280:** Establishes the **Finance Commission** to recommend devolution of taxes. GST, introduced in **2017** through the **101st Constitutional Amendment**, replaced the origin-based tax system with a **destination-based system**, leading to a **centralisation of revenue powers** under the GST Council—where the Centre has a dominant role. While designed to promote cooperative federalism, this transition significantly curtailed **States’ independent taxation powers**.

3. Declining Fiscal Autonomy and Centralisation of Resources

Before GST, States collected about **33% of total tax revenue**. Post-GST, this ratio remains stagnant, even as **States’ expenditure responsibilities** have increased to 52% of total public spending (2022–23). The **Centre’s collection powers** remain robust due to rising **cesses and surcharges**, which are **non-shareable** under Article 270. In FY 2025–26, cess and surcharge revenues are projected to exceed ₹4.2 lakh crore, excluding the GST compensation cess. This practice effectively **reduces the divisible pool**, despite the **Finance Commission’s recommendation of a 41% devolution** (reduced from 42% after J&K’s reorganisation). As a result, States face **cash flow constraints**, reduced fiscal space, and growing dependence on Central transfers—ranging from **72% in Bihar** to **20% in Haryana**.

4. Role of the Finance Commission and Issues in Resource Devolution

The **Finance Commission (FC)**, constituted under **Article 280**, recommends tax-sharing formulas and grants. However, States have often criticised:

- **Inconsistency in criteria** and relative weights across FCs.
- **Perceived bias against progressive States**, which contribute more to the national tax pool.
- **Opaque fund flow mechanisms** through **Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS)** and **Central Sector Schemes**, which bypass fiscal autonomy.

Following the **abolition of the Planning Commission (2014)**, Article 282 allows discretionary Central grants, but States allege **non-transparent allocation** and **political bias**, especially toward Opposition-ruled States.



5. Towards Fiscal Autonomy: Proposed Reforms and Comparative Models

To rebalance fiscal federalism, experts propose:

- **Sharing of personal income tax (IT) base** between the Centre and States, similar to GST. For instance, if IT revenues of ₹13.5 lakh crore (BE 2025–26) are split 50:50, it could strengthen States’ liquidity and reduce dependency.
- **Allowing States to “top up” personal IT rates**, providing flexibility and rewarding progressive States for their higher economic activity.
- **Revisiting cess and surcharge policies**, merging them into the divisible pool to ensure equitable sharing.
- Learning from **Canada’s federal model**, where the Centre collects 46% of taxes and spends 40%, while provinces collect 54% and spend 60%, ensuring greater **fiscal decentralisation** and **policy flexibility**.

Definition of Key Term

GST Compensation Cess: A temporary levy imposed under the **GST (Compensation to States) Act, 2017**



to compensate States for revenue losses incurred due to the transition to GST. It was to be paid for five years (2017–2022) and has now been **merged with the regular GST tax structure**.

6. Implications for Cooperative Federalism and Economic Governance

The GST era has transformed India's **fiscal architecture**, centralising tax powers but decentralising expenditure responsibilities. The mismatch between revenue-raising authority and expenditure commitments has deepened **vertical fiscal imbalance**. To sustain **cooperative federalism**, fiscal reforms must empower States with greater control over resources, transparent transfers, and flexibility to innovate locally. Without these, fiscal centralisation may undermine democratic accountability and policy responsiveness at the subnational level.

Conclusion

The end of GST compensation and the rising dominance of cesses and surcharges have reignited debates over **Centre-State fiscal balance**. As States shoulder growing responsibilities in health, education, agriculture, and local governance, restoring their **fiscal autonomy** is crucial for equitable development and democratic stability. Strengthening **federal fiscal architecture**, rationalising **revenue sharing**, and enabling **States' participation in direct taxation** will reinforce India's model of **cooperative and competitive federalism**.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2:** Governance – Centre-State relations, cooperative federalism, Finance Commission, fiscal federalism.
- **GS Paper 3:** Indian Economy – Resource mobilisation, taxation reforms, fiscal policy.
- **Key Concepts:** GST Compensation Cess, Fiscal Autonomy, Vertical Imbalance, Cesses and Surcharges, Finance Commission.

11. Climate Finance, Technology, and Capacity-Building Central to a Fair Transition – India at G20 Environment Ministers' Meeting, Cape Town

1. Background and Context: India's Stand at G20 Climate Meet

At the **G20 Environment Ministers' Meeting** in Cape Town (October 2025), India, represented by **Union Minister Shri Bhupender Yadav**, reaffirmed its commitment to **integrating climate action with development** while upholding the principles of **Equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC)**. India's statement highlighted that **climate finance, technology transfer, and capacity-building** are fundamental pillars for ensuring a **just, fair, and equitable transition** for developing nations.

2. Integrating Climate and Development: India's Equity-Based Approach

India underscored that climate action cannot be separated from **developmental imperatives**, especially for emerging economies still addressing poverty, food security, and energy access. The nation called for the global transition to be **just and inclusive**, emphasizing that **developing countries require financial and technological support** to

achieve emission reduction targets without compromising growth. This aligns with India's long-standing stance under the **UNFCCC** and **Paris Agreement** frameworks that climate action must reflect **"common but differentiated responsibilities."**





3. Key Policy Areas Highlighted by India at G20

- (a) **Biodiversity and Conservation:** India endorsed **ecosystem-based and participatory conservation approaches**, but cautioned against the **commodification of biodiversity**, stressing the need to maintain ecological integrity over profit motives.
- (b) **Land Degradation and Drought:** India welcomed global recognition of **land restoration** as an economic opportunity and called for a **G20 Knowledge and Solution Exchange Platform** for sharing best practices. The Minister advocated **non-restrictive and co-developed technology transfers**, focusing on **women, youth, and small farmers**.
- (c) **Chemicals and Waste Management:** India supported the **circular economy model** and highlighted its **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** frameworks as scalable solutions. It urged that global frameworks remain **voluntary and nationally determined**, avoiding trade barriers or restrictive technology standards that could burden **SMEs and developing economies**.
- (d) **Climate Change and Just Transitions:** India called for equitable financing, voluntary technology partnerships, and **capacity-building support** to ensure developing nations can pursue low-carbon pathways without economic disruption.
- (e) **Oceans and Marine Resources:** India backed **Marine Spatial Planning** and **voluntary mechanisms** to tackle marine pollution, such as **Abandoned and Lost Fishing Gear (ALFG)**, while protecting **small fishers' livelihoods**. It emphasized **equity in decarbonising marine transport**, respecting **national contexts** and clearly defining **means of implementation** for developing countries.

4. Constitutional, Legal, and International Frameworks Related to India's Position

- **Article 48A (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Mandates the State to protect and improve the environment.
- **Article 51A(g):** Imposes a duty on citizens to protect the natural environment.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Provides a legal framework for environmental governance in India.
- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC), 2008:** Focuses on sustainable growth through renewable energy, energy efficiency, and ecosystem protection.
- **Paris Agreement (2015):** India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) include reducing emissions intensity of GDP by 45% by 2030 and achieving **Net Zero by 2070**.
- **CBDR Principle:** A foundational element under the UNFCCC, acknowledging that while all nations share responsibility for climate action, developed countries must lead in financing and technology transfer.

5. Key Challenges and Policy Implications

India's emphasis on **finance, technology, and capacity-building** underscores challenges faced by developing countries:

- **Insufficient climate finance flow**—developed nations have yet to deliver the committed **USD 100 billion annually**.
- **Restrictive technology regimes** limit access to green innovations.
- **Asymmetric global standards** in waste management and trade risk disadvantaging emerging economies.

India's advocacy for **voluntary, non-prescriptive, and cooperative approaches** aims to ensure **climate justice**, where economic development and environmental sustainability coexist harmoniously.



Definition of Key Term

Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR): A principle under international environmental law recognizing that while all countries are responsible for addressing global environmental degradation, they are not equally responsible due to differences in historical emissions and developmental capacities.

6. Conclusion

India's intervention at the G20 meeting reaffirms its role as a **bridge between developed and developing worlds** in global climate diplomacy. By championing **equitable finance, inclusive technology transfer, and capacity-building**, India calls for a **people-centric, justice-oriented transition** that safeguards both the planet and livelihoods. The approach reinforces the idea that **sustainability and development must progress together**, not in opposition.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2:** International Relations – India and global environmental diplomacy (UNFCCC, G20, Paris Agreement).
- **GS Paper 3:** Environment and Ecology – Climate finance, sustainable development, and technology transfer.
- **GS Paper 4:** Ethics – Climate justice, global equity, and intergenerational responsibility.
- **Key Concepts:** CBDR, Climate Finance, Just Transition, Circular Economy, Capacity Building, Ecosystem-based Approaches.

12. Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Should Advance Goals of the Global South – India's Call for Reorientation

1. Background and Context: India's Stand at NAM Mid-Term Meeting

At the **19th Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Mid-Term Ministerial Meeting** held in **Kampala, Uganda**, India's Minister of State for External Affairs **Kirti Vardhan Singh** called for NAM to **"repurpose" itself to advance the aspirations of the Global South**. He emphasized that the movement—born during the Cold War to preserve strategic autonomy—must adapt to **contemporary geopolitical realities**, focusing on the needs and development priorities of **developing nations**. India reiterated its long-standing commitment to **multilateralism, South-South cooperation, and global equity**, positioning NAM as a key voice of the Global South in today's multipolar world.

2. India's Vision: Reformed Multilateralism and Equity in Global Governance

India underscored that **reformed multilateralism** is essential for making global institutions more representative and equitable. The Minister called for reforms in:

- The **UN Security Council (UNSC)** to reflect the geopolitical realities of the 21st century.
- **International financial institutions (IFIs)** to enhance the decision-making power of developing economies.

This aligns with India's **G20 Presidency theme — "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (One Earth, One Family, One Future)** — which seeks inclusive global governance, fair representation, and reform of post-World War II institutions dominated by developed powers.





3. Strengthening Global South Solidarity through NAM

India urged NAM members to reposition the group as a **platform for collective action by the Global South** on global economic, technological, and environmental challenges. The Minister called for:

- **Destigmatising migration and facilitating the mobility of skilled professionals**, to harness the **demographic dividend** of developing nations.
- Promoting **South-South knowledge exchange** and cooperation in innovation, trade, and technology.
- Using NAM as a **moral and diplomatic force** to ensure equitable participation of the Global South in global decision-making forums like the **UN, WTO, and IMF**.

4. India's Position on Palestine and International Peace

At the **NAM Ministerial Committee on Palestine**, India reaffirmed its **consistent support for a “two-state solution”**, calling for:

- The establishment of a **sovereign, independent, and viable State of Palestine**,
- Coexisting **peacefully with Israel** within secure and recognized borders. India condemned violence against civilians and asserted that **innocent Palestinians must not suffer** due to the ongoing conflict. This stance reflects India's historical commitment to **self-determination, peace, and non-interference**, central to NAM's founding ethos and India's foreign policy principles since Nehru's leadership.

5. Constitutional and Legal Provisions Supporting India's NAM Philosophy

- **Article 51(c) of the Indian Constitution:** Directs the State to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **Article 51(d):** Advocates for the settlement of international disputes through peaceful means. These provisions, part of the **Directive Principles of State Policy**, mirror NAM's foundational principles—**non-alignment, peaceful coexistence, and mutual cooperation**. India's participation in NAM continues to align with its **strategic autonomy policy**, allowing engagement with multiple power blocs without formal alignment.

Definition of Key Term

Global South: A collective term for developing and emerging countries, primarily in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, which share common developmental challenges and often advocate for greater equity in global governance and resource distribution.

6. Conclusion: Revitalising NAM for a Multipolar World

India's call for NAM's reorientation reflects a pragmatic approach to **reclaiming its relevance in global politics**. In an era of climate crises, technological inequality, and geopolitical polarization, NAM must evolve from being a **Cold War-era bloc** into a **platform for development cooperation, digital equity, and fair global governance**. India's advocacy for reformed multilateralism, equitable migration policies, and the empowerment of the Global South reinforces its leadership role as a **voice for developing nations**.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 2:** International Relations – India's foreign policy, NAM, South-South cooperation, and global governance reforms.
- **GS Paper 3:** Globalisation and its impact on developing countries; sustainable and inclusive development.



- **Key Concepts:** Non-Aligned Movement, Global South, Reformed Multilateralism, Strategic Autonomy, Two-State Solution.
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