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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & **STUDY CENTRE**

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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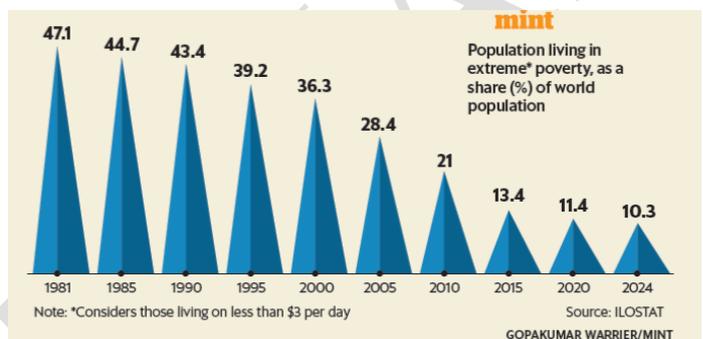
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1. Has Kerala Really Eradicated Extreme Poverty?

Key Summary Points

- **Kerala's Declaration (1 November 2024):** The Kerala government declared the state *free from extreme poverty* under its **Extreme Poverty Eradication Project (EPEP)**, claiming no household in the state lacks basic necessities.
- **Definition of Extreme Poverty:** According to the **World Bank**, individuals living on **less than \$3 per day** fall under *extreme poverty* (revised from \$2.15/day in 2025). Poverty includes deprivation in **food, housing, health, and income**.
- **Implementation Approach:** Using **NITI Aayog's Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)**, the state identified **64,006 families (about 1.03 lakh individuals)**. They were provided with ration cards/Aadhaar, healthcare access, housing/land, and livelihood support. The project cost was **₹1,000 crore**.
- **Criticism and Concerns:** Economists and opposition parties questioned the **lack of transparent data and formal survey methodology**. The claim contradicts **National Food Security Act (2013)** records, which list **5.92 lakh extremely poor persons** in Kerala receiving **Antyodaya Anna Yojana** support.
- **Global and National Context:** Global extreme poverty has declined from **47.1% in 1981 to 10.3% in 2024**, but **839 million people** still live below \$3/day. India still has around **5.3% population in extreme poverty**, though Kerala claims zero.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Ensures *Right to Life with dignity*, implying access to basic needs.
- **Directive Principles:**
 - **Art. 38:** Promote welfare and reduce inequality.
 - **Art. 39:** Equitable resource distribution and livelihoods.
 - **Art. 41:** Right to work and public assistance.
 - **Art. 47:** Duty of the state to improve nutrition and public health.
- **National Food Security Act (2013):** Ensures subsidized grains to identified poor families, including **AAY households** (poorest of the poor).

Key Concepts

- **Multidimensional Poverty:** Measures poverty beyond income; includes health, education, and living standards indicators.
- **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY):** Scheme providing highly subsidized food grains to the poorest segments.

Conclusion

Kerala's declaration reflects its **strong welfare governance model**, robust local self-government, and social



infrastructure. However, **methodological opacity**, lack of independently verifiable data, and contradictions with NFSA records raise concerns. The achievement may represent **substantial reduction**, but full *eradication* remains debated.

UPSC Relevance

Useful for **GS Paper 2 (Governance, Welfare Schemes)**, **GS Paper 3 (Poverty & Development Indicators)**, **GS Paper 1 (Society)**, and **Essay**. Relevant themes: **Kerala Model**, **Multidimensional Poverty Index**, **Social justice**, **SDG-1 (No Poverty)**, and **State vs National poverty measurement frameworks**.

2. Railways' Revenue Efficiency Seen at Five-Year Best in FY27

Key Summary Points

- **Operating Ratio Improvement:** Indian Railways is projected to bring its **operating ratio below 98% in FY 2026-27**, the best performance in five years. Operating Ratio = *Working Expenses / Traffic Earnings*. A lower ratio indicates higher revenue efficiency and surplus availability for capital expenditure.
- **Drivers of Improvement:** Key factors include **higher freight and passenger earnings**, improved post-pandemic traffic, and **increased Gross Budgetary Support (GBS)** from the Centre, expected to be **above 90% of total capital allocation** in FY27.
- **Recent Trend:** Operating ratio fluctuated in recent years due to pension and salary burdens: **107.39% (2021-22)**, **98.14% (2022-23)**, **98.43% (2023-24 & 2025-26 est.)**. The projected improvement in FY27 aims to approach **97.45%**, last achieved in **2020-21**.
- **Revenue Expectations:** Internal surplus generation may rise from roughly **₹3,000 crore in FY26** to **₹5,000 crore+ in FY27**, with total passenger + freight earnings expected to increase from **₹3 trillion currently to approx. ₹3.25–3.30 trillion** next year.
- **Concerns by Experts:** Former Railway officials argue that real efficiency requires **transparent accounting**, especially separating **pension and salary liabilities** into general finances, and evaluating returns from **high-value projects** (e.g., Vande Bharat, Dedicated Freight Corridors). Efficiency must also improve through **expenditure control and asset utilization**.



Key Concepts

- **Operating Ratio (OR):** A measure of financial efficiency showing how much Railways spends to earn ₹100. *Lower OR = higher efficiency*.
- **Gross Budgetary Support (GBS):** Central government funding allocated to Railways for capital and infrastructure expansion.
- **Non-Fare Revenue:** Earnings from sources other than ticketing and freight (advertisements, land leasing, station redevelopment). Currently ~4% of total revenue; government aims to increase this share.



Constitutional & Policy Context

- **Union List Entry 22 (Railways):** Rail transport is a central subject, enabling national-level planning and financing.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Efficiency Principle:** Linked to the spirit of ensuring **public sector enterprises operate efficiently**, aligning with goals of **prudent public expenditure and infrastructure modernization**.

Conclusion

The projected improvement in Railways' operating ratio suggests strengthening **financial health** and **revenue efficiency**, supported by freight growth and central funding. However, **sustainable efficiency** will depend on structural reforms—transparent accounting, managing pension burden, enhancing non-fare revenue, and measuring returns on capital-intensive projects.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper 3:** Infrastructure, Public Finance, Transport Sector Reforms.
- **GS Paper 2:** Government Budgetary Support, Public Sector Management.
- Helpful in essays on **infrastructure-led growth, Indian Railways modernization, and fiscal efficiency in public enterprises**.

3. Special Intensive Revision (SIR) 2.0 of Electoral Rolls

Key Summary Points

- **Launch of SIR 2.0:** The Election Commission has begun the **second phase of Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of electoral rolls in **9 States and 3 Union Territories**, covering nearly **51 crore voters**. Booth-Level Officers (BLOs) are visiting households to distribute **pre-filled voter enumeration forms** for verification and correction.
- **Objective of SIR:** The exercise aims to ensure **accurate, updated, and clean electoral rolls**, identifying duplicate, shifted, deceased, or ineligible voters while enabling addition of eligible voters. Verification will continue till **December 4**, with each household visited **at least three times**.
- **States Involved:** The SIR exercise covers **Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal**. Notably, **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, and Puducherry** will face Assembly elections in **2026**, making this revision politically significant.
- **Political Concerns & Opposition:**
 - **TMC (West Bengal)** alleges the revision is a form of **“silent and invisible rigging”** designed to remove legitimate voters.
 - **DMK (Tamil Nadu)** has approached the **Supreme Court**, calling the revision **arbitrary and prone to wrongful disenfranchisement**.





- **BJP** supports the exercise, calling it an effort toward **transparency and reducing voter fraud**.
- **Scale of the Exercise:** Over **5.3 lakh BLOs**, **7.64 lakh Booth Level Agents** (nominated by parties), **10,448 Electoral Registration Officers**, and **321 District Election Officers** are involved. The Commission aims for **voter-friendly implementation**.

Key Concepts

- **Electoral Roll:** The official list of eligible voters in a constituency, updated regularly under the **Representation of the People Act, 1950**.
- **Booth-Level Officer (BLO):** Grassroots official responsible for local verification of voters.
- **Disenfranchisement:** Wrongful removal or denial of the right to vote to eligible citizens.

Constitutional & Legal Basis

- **Article 324:** Empowers the Election Commission to supervise, direct, and control elections.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1950:** Governs preparation and revision of electoral rolls.
- **Right to Vote:** Though not a fundamental right, it is a **constitutional and statutory right**, protected against arbitrary exclusion.

Conclusion

SIR 2.0 is a critical effort to **clean and update electoral rolls**, particularly ahead of major elections. While it can help strengthen **electoral integrity**, concerns regarding **transparency, oversight, and risk of unintended voter exclusion** highlight the need for **impartial, verifiable procedures**.

UPSC Relevance

Relevant for **GS Paper 2 (Election Commission, Electoral Reforms, Federal Dynamics)** and **Polity & Governance** questions. Useful for topics like **free and fair elections, voter fraud vs disenfranchisement, and electoral roll management**. Potential in **Essay** on electoral integrity and democratic legitimacy.

4. India–Israel Ties and Current Diplomatic Engagements

Key Summary Points

- **Context of Engagement:** Amid concerns over the fragile ceasefire situation in the **Gaza Strip**, Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar met India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval in New Delhi to discuss strategic and security matters.
- **Strategic Partnership:** S. Jaishankar emphasized that **India–Israel relations are characterized by a high degree of trust, reliability, and mutual understanding**. The partnership is particularly strong in the areas of **security, intelligence-sharing, defence cooperation, agriculture, water management, and technology**.
- **Counter-Terror Cooperation:** Both sides highlighted the importance of **zero-tolerance towards terrorism in all forms**, stressing enhanced **counter-terror cooperation** and a joint approach to address global and regional security challenges.





- **Diplomatic Capacity Building:** The two Ministers oversaw the signing of an agreement between the **Sushma Swaraj Institute of Foreign Service (India)** and the **Foreign Ministry of Israel** for **diplomatic training and institutional cooperation**, strengthening long-term diplomatic engagement.
- **Continuity and Stability:** India maintains a **balanced West Asia policy**, supporting **two-state solution in the Israel-Palestine conflict**, while simultaneously deepening strategic and technological cooperation with Israel.

Key Concepts

- **Strategic Partnership:** A long-term relationship involving cooperation in defence, technology, intelligence, and foreign policy coordination.
- **Zero-Tolerance towards Terrorism:** A policy stance advocating no support, justification, or shelter to any terror activity or actor.

Constitutional & Policy Basis

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles):** Promotes peaceful international relations and respect for international law.
- **India's Foreign Policy Principles:** Based on non-alignment, strategic autonomy, and maintaining balanced relations among competing powers.
- **National Security Framework:** Strengthens cooperation with partners to combat cross-border terrorism and cyber threats.

Conclusion

India–Israel relations continue to deepen on the basis of **mutual trust, shared security concerns, and technological collaboration**. While strategically strengthening cooperation with Israel, India seeks to maintain a balanced diplomatic position in West Asia, especially regarding Palestinian issues.

UPSC Relevance

Useful for **GS Paper 2** (International Relations, Foreign Policy, West Asia), **GS Paper 3** (Internal Security & Counter-Terror Cooperation), and **Essay** topics on **strategic partnerships, balanced diplomacy, and regional stability in West Asia**. Potential for Prelims questions on **India–Israel defence and diplomatic cooperation frameworks**.

5. Challenges to the Israel– Hamas Ceasefire and U.S. Role

Key Summary Points

- **Ceasefire Under Strain:** The ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas is facing difficulties as **Hamas has not yet returned the remaining bodies of Israeli captives** taken during the October 7, 2023 attack, which is a required step before moving to the next phase of the ceasefire. Once this step is completed, Hamas would be expected to **begin disarmament**, which remains the central point of contention.
- **Recent Escalations:** A recent incident in which **Hamas killed an Israeli soldier** triggered Israeli retaliation resulting in **over 100 deaths in Gaza**, indicating how fragile the ceasefire remains and how easily violence can resume.
- **U.S. Pressure on Israel:** The **United States under President Donald Trump** has increased direct involvement, deploying personnel and **using surveillance drones in Gaza**. High-level U.S. visits to



Israel signal that **Washington is exerting political and military pressure** on Prime Minister Netanyahu to follow its ceasefire roadmap.

- **Israeli Domestic Political Tensions:** The Trump Administration's proposed 20-Point Gaza Plan and warnings against annexing the West Bank have created **political discomfort within Israel**, particularly among right-wing and settler factions. Israel now faces a **paradox** of being militarily powerful but **strategically dependent on U.S. support**.
- **Hamás's Position:** Although militarily weaker, **Hamás holds leverage** because it can slow the ceasefire process and is **less constrained politically**. While Qatar and Turkey helped pressure Hamás to accept the deal, how long Hamás will remain cooperative is uncertain.

Key Concepts

- **Ceasefire:** A temporary pause in conflict agreed upon by warring parties, but without necessarily resolving underlying political disputes.
- **Strategic Leverage:** The advantage a party holds in negotiations by controlling a key variable, such as hostages or diplomatic support.

International Law & Policy Context

- **International Humanitarian Law (Geneva Conventions):** Requires humane treatment of civilians and prisoners; hostage-taking and targeting civilians are violations.
- **Two-State Solution Framework:** Supported by the UN, advocating independent Israeli and Palestinian states living side-by-side peacefully.

Conclusion

The current ceasefire arrangement reveals a complex strategic imbalance: **Israel is militarily strong but politically constrained**, while **Hamás is militarily weaker but politically more flexible**. U.S. involvement may stabilize the situation temporarily, but **long-term peace requires regional cooperation, reconciliation, and trust-building**, not merely externally imposed deals.

UPSC Relevance

Useful for **GS Paper 2 (International Relations – West Asia, Role of Great Powers)**, **GS Paper 3 (Internal Security, Counterterrorism Dynamics)**, and **Essay** topics on **peace diplomacy, power asymmetry, and conflict resolution**. This case illustrates how **geopolitics, domestic politics, and ideology** interact in conflict zones.

6. Revised Green India Mission (GIM) and India's Forest Restoration Strategy

Key Summary Points

- **Revised GIM Target:** India's updated **Green India Mission** aims to **restore 25 million hectares of degraded forest and non-forest land by 2030**, contributing to the national pledge of creating an **additional carbon sink of up to 3.39 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent** this decade.
- **Need for Quality Restoration:** Recent research (IIT Kharagpur, IIT Bombay, BITS Pilani, 2025) shows a **12% decline in photosynthetic efficiency** in dense forests due to **higher temperatures and soil drying**, meaning **merely increasing forest cover is insufficient**; restoration must enhance **ecological resilience and climate adaptability**, not just canopy density.
- **Landscape and Policy Integration:** The revised mission shifts focus toward **biodiversity-rich and climate-sensitive regions** (Aravallis, Western Ghats, mangroves, Himalayan catchments), aligning



with **National Agroforestry Policy**, watershed programs, and **CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Fund)** to ensure coordinated implementation.

- **Community Rights and Participation:** Around **200 million people depend on forests**, and the **Forest Rights Act, 2006** legally empowers communities to manage forests. However, many past afforestation drives bypassed local consent. Successful models (e.g., **Odisha's Joint Forest Management Committees, Chhattisgarh's livelihood-linked restoration**) show the importance of **community-led restoration**.
- **Native Species and Capacity Building:** Moving away from **monoculture plantations (eucalyptus/acacia)**, the new approach prioritizes **native, site-specific species**. This requires strengthening **training institutions** and ecological expertise within forest departments; Tamil Nadu's **rapid mangrove expansion** is a notable successful example.
- **Financing Challenges:** While **CAMPA holds ₹95,000 crore**, fund utilization remains low and uneven. Progress depends on **smart expenditure and innovative financing** such as **carbon credits (Himachal biochar initiative)** and **local carbon market links (Uttar Pradesh model)**.



Key Concepts

- **Restoration vs. Afforestation:** *Restoration* focuses on reviving ecosystem function and biodiversity; *afforestation* often focuses only on planting trees.
- **Carbon Sink:** A natural system that absorbs more CO₂ than it emits, crucial for climate mitigation.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (Directive Principles):** The State must protect and improve forests and the environment.
- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duty):** Citizens must protect natural environment.
- **Forest Rights Act, 2006:** Recognizes the rights of forest-dependent communities to manage and conserve forests.
- **CAMPA Act, 2016:** Governs utilization of compensatory afforestation funds for ecological restoration.

Conclusion

India has the **legal framework, financial resources, and institutional capacity** to achieve meaningful forest restoration. Success depends on **community participation, ecological science-driven planning, transparent monitoring, and smarter fund utilization**. Restoration must shift from counting trees to **building climate-resilient, biodiverse ecosystems** that support both people and nature.

UPSC Relevance

Relevant for **GS Paper 3 (Environment, Climate Change, Conservation, Sustainable Development)**, **GS Paper 1 (Geography – Forests & Ecology)**, and **Essay** topics on climate justice, nature-based solutions, and community-led development. Provides examples for **case studies in mains** and interviews on *climate action and environmental governance*.



7. BRICS Efforts to Challenge the Dollar-Dominated Financial System and Develop BRICS Pay

Key Summary Points

- **Shift Toward Financial Sovereignty:** Over the past decade, **BRICS** (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, and new members like Iran) have taken steps to **reduce dependency on the U.S. dollar-based global financial system**, aiming to strengthen **financial autonomy** and limit exposure to Western sanctions.
- **Institutional Foundations:** The **2014 Fortaleza Summit** led to the creation of the **New Development Bank (NDB)** and the **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**—the first global financial institutions created by developing countries to offer development financing and crisis support independent of the IMF and World Bank.
- **Move Toward Local Currency Use:** Following U.S. sanctions on Russia (2014), BRICS began promoting **local currency settlements, currency swaps, and direct investments in local currencies**, reducing reliance on the dollar for intra-BRICS trade and financial transactions.
- **BRICS Pay Initiative:** The most significant step is the **BRICS Cross-Border Payments Initiative (BRICS Pay)**—intended to **reduce reliance on the SWIFT network** (controlled by G-10 central banks) for international money transfers. A **prototype demonstration was launched in Moscow in October 2024**.
- **Existing Infrastructure for BRICS Pay:** Member countries already have strong domestic payment platforms—**Russia's SPFS, China's CIPS, India's UPI, and Brazil's Pix**—which can be integrated to create a **parallel international payment system**. However, **interoperability challenges and national ambitions** delay progress.
- **Geopolitical Push & U.S. Pressure:** Discussions intensified after **Donald Trump threatened 100% tariffs** on BRICS if they promoted a new currency. Ironically, such pressure may **accelerate BRICS unity** and the launch of BRICS Pay to safeguard **strategic autonomy**.



Key Concepts

- **Financial Sovereignty:** The ability of a state to control its own monetary and financial policies without external pressure.
- **SWIFT:** The global interbank messaging system that enables banks to execute international payments; often used by the U.S. to enforce sanctions.
- **Local Currency Settlement:** Trade transactions conducted using national currencies instead of the U.S. dollar.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions (India Context)

- **Article 51:** Promotes international peace, cooperation, and equitable global order.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** Governs foreign exchange transactions and allows India to enter bilateral/multilateral currency arrangements.



- **RBI Regulatory Role:** Oversight of cross-border payment mechanisms and digital financial integration.

Conclusion

BRICS' move to challenge the dollar-dominated financial system reflects a **strategic shift toward multipolarity** in global finance. While **BRICS Pay offers a realistic alternative to SWIFT**, success will depend on overcoming **interoperability challenges**, aligning national interests, and ensuring **trust and technological security**. The process is gradual but signals an evolving **post-dollar world order**.

UPSC Relevance

Relevant for **GS Paper 2 (International Relations – Multilateral Groupings, Global Governance)** and **GS Paper 3 (Economy – International Financial Architecture)**. Useful for Essay themes on multipolarity, de-dollarization, global South cooperation, and **International Relations answers on BRICS as a counterweight to Western dominance**.

8. Supreme Court Flags Misuse of POCSO Act in Consensual Adolescent Relationships

Key Summary Points

- **Concern Over Misuse:** The Supreme Court has expressed concern over increasing cases where the **POCSO Act is invoked against consensual relationships between adolescents**, especially when parents disapprove of the relationship. The court noted that the law, meant to protect children from sexual exploitation, is being used as **punitive retaliation**.
- **Need for Awareness:** The Bench highlighted the need for **greater legal awareness**, particularly among **male adolescents**, who often face criminal charges despite the consensual nature of the interaction. The Court is considering issuing **nationwide directions to spread legal literacy** regarding POCSO provisions.
- **Context of the Case:** The observations came during the hearing of a writ petition urging the inclusion of **gender equality and legal sensitization in school curricula**, to address issues of consent, dignity, and respectful relationships.
- **State Responses Awaited:** Several States and Union Territories (Telangana, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, etc.) have not yet submitted responses on steps taken to add **sexual equality and moral education** in schools. The Court has given a **final opportunity** before issuing formal directives.
- **Judicial Stand:** The Court reaffirmed that the aim of POCSO is to **protect children**, not to criminalize **adolescent romantic behaviour**, stressing the need to prevent **over-criminalization** that can harm the futures of young individuals.



Key Concepts

- **POCSO Act, 2012:** A law aimed at protecting children under 18 from sexual offences. It defines consent as legally irrelevant for minors, making all sexual acts with minors punishable.
- **Consensual Adolescent Relationships:** Romantic/sexual relationships between individuals close in age but below 18; currently treated as offences under POCSO despite mutual consent.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 14:** Right to equality before the law.
- **Article 21:** Protection of life and personal liberty, which includes dignity and autonomy.
- **POCSO Section 4 & 6:** Provide stringent punishment for sexual assault; however, courts have increasingly recognized need for “**close-in-age**” protection.
- **Judicial Trend:** Various High Courts have called for **reforms to avoid criminalization of consensual adolescent intimacy**.

Conclusion

While the POCSO Act remains essential for protecting children from exploitation, **its application must be nuanced** to avoid harming young individuals in consensual relationships. The Supreme Court’s initiative to promote **legal awareness and gender sensitization** is a step toward ensuring the law is used to **protect, not punish**.

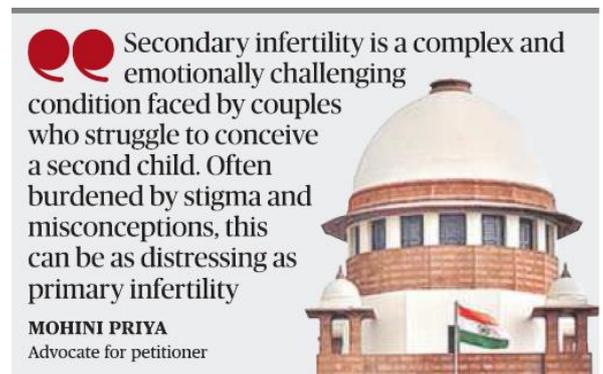
UPSC Relevance

Applicable to **GS Paper 2** (Judiciary, Child Rights, Social Justice), **GS Paper 1** (Society & Gender), **GS Paper 4** (Ethics—dignity, autonomy). Useful for **mains answers, essays, and interview** discussions on **criminal justice reform, child protection laws, and balancing welfare with rights**.

9. Supreme Court to Review Surrogacy Ban for Couples with One Existing Child

Key Summary Points

- **Issue Before the Court:** The Supreme Court has agreed to examine whether **Section 4(iii)(C)(II) of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021**, which **prohibits couples with one biological/adopted child from accessing surrogacy** (except in special circumstances), amounts to **unconstitutional interference in reproductive autonomy**.
- **Government’s Stand:** The Union government argued that **surrogacy is not a fundamental right**, but a **statutory privilege** subject to restrictions. It emphasized that surrogacy involves the use of **another woman’s body**, and must be allowed only **after other methods such as natural conception and assisted reproductive technologies (ART) have been exhausted**.
- **Petitioner’s Argument:** The petitioner highlighted **secondary infertility**—where couples face difficulty conceiving after already having a biological child—stating that it causes **emotional and psychological distress** and that the **State should not regulate personal reproductive choices**. India has **no one-child policy**, and the restriction unfairly denies parenthood to such couples.
- **Existing Exception:** The Act **permits surrogacy** for couples who already have a child **only when the existing child has a severe disability, life-threatening disorder, or incurable illness**, indicating that the law aims to **minimize non-essential surrogacy and prevent exploitation of surrogate mothers**.
- **Judicial Observations:** The Bench noted that the restriction could be seen as “**reasonable**”, referencing concerns about population pressure. The Court, however, is seeking responses from all





States and Union Territories before issuing **guidelines or directions** on awareness and lawful application of surrogacy provisions.

Key Concepts

- **Surrogacy:** A reproductive arrangement where a woman (surrogate) carries a child for intending parents.
- **Secondary Infertility:** Inability to conceive a second child after previously having one or more successful pregnancies.
- **Reproductive Autonomy:** The right of individuals to make decisions on reproduction without unreasonable State interference.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Protects personal liberty and privacy, which includes reproductive choices (recognized in *K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India*).
- **Article 14:** Right to equality; any classification (e.g., between couples with and without one child) must be reasonable and non-arbitrary.
- **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021:** Allows only **altruistic surrogacy**, prohibits commercial surrogacy, and sets eligibility criteria for intending couples.
- **ART Act, 2021:** Regulates assisted reproductive technologies and defines infertility.

Conclusion

The case reflects the **tension between reproductive autonomy and ethical safeguards in surrogacy**. While the State seeks to prevent misuse and protect surrogate mothers, **blanket prohibitions may risk being discriminatory** against couples facing secondary infertility. The Court's eventual decision may shape **the balance between personal choice and regulatory oversight** in India's reproductive rights framework.

UPSC Relevance

Useful for **GS Paper 2** (Governance, Rights Issues, Judiciary), **GS Paper 1** (Society – Family & Gender Issues), **Ethics Paper** (Autonomy, Dignity). Important for **essay and interview** on themes such as **reproductive rights, bodily autonomy, and balancing regulation with individual freedoms**.

10. Supreme Court Seeks Detailed Government Response on Online Gaming Regulation

Key Summary Points

- **Supreme Court Direction:** The Supreme Court has asked the **Union Government to submit a comprehensive reply** on petitions challenging the new online gaming law that **prohibits online money-based games** and restricts associated activities such as **banking support and advertising**.
- **Core Issue:** The petitions challenge the law on the grounds that it may **violate the right to trade and profession (Article 19(1)(g))** and does not sufficiently distinguish between **games of skill and games of chance**, potentially criminalizing legitimate digital gaming and e-sports industries.
- **Law Under Question:** The challenged legal framework seeks to **ban real-money gaming platforms**, including fantasy sports, rummy, poker and betting apps, and **bars UPI/banking**



channels from processing related transactions. It aims to prevent **gambling addiction, financial fraud, and exploitation of minors** in the rapidly growing online gaming sector.

- **Government's Stand Expected:** The Centre is expected to clarify **regulatory rationale, classification of games, consumer protection mechanisms, and the role of the proposed National Gaming Regulator**, while addressing concerns of **economic impact and freedom of digital innovation**.
- **Judicial Context:** The hearing has been **posted for November 26**, indicating that the Court intends to **scrutinize constitutional validity**, particularly in light of earlier rulings that recognized '**games of skill**' as **legitimate business activities**.



Key Concepts

- **Games of Skill vs. Games of Chance:**
 - *Games of Skill* require mental or physical skill (e.g., chess, rummy).
 - *Games of Chance* are based largely on luck (e.g., lotteries, gambling).
Courts have historically **allowed games of skill** under business freedom protections.
- **Online Real-Money Games:** Digital games where players use real currency and may win financial rewards, raising concerns of addiction and financial harm.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 19(1)(g):** Protects right to practice trade/profession; restrictions must be reasonable under **Article 19(6)**.
- **Article 21:** Includes right to privacy and protection from exploitative digital ecosystems.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Provides framework for digital regulation and intermediary liability.
- **Public Gambling Act, 1867:** Governs gambling practices but requires modernization for the digital era.

Conclusion

The case represents a **balancing challenge**: protecting **citizens, particularly youth**, from risks of **online gambling addiction and financial loss**, while ensuring that **legitimate skill-based gaming and the emerging digital gaming economy are not unjustly curtailed**. The Court's ruling will shape **India's digital economy, consumer rights, and tech-regulation landscape**.

UPSC Relevance

Relevant for **GS Paper 2 (Governance, Cyber Regulation, Fundamental Rights)**, **GS Paper 3 (Digital Economy, IT Act, Innovation vs Regulation)**, and **Essay** themes on balancing **public welfare and economic freedom**. Important for discussions on **regulatory frameworks for emerging technologies**.



11. CITES Committee Recommends India Pause Import of Endangered Animals

Key Summary Points

- **Recommendation to Pause Imports:** A committee of CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) has recommended that India temporarily suspend permits for importing endangered animals for zoos and wildlife rescue centres until a thorough review of current procedures is completed.
- **Context of Review:** The recommendation follows the committee's visit to the Greens Zoological Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre (GZRRC) and Radha Krishna Temple Elephant Welfare Trust (RKTEWT) in Jamnagar, part of the Vantara project supported by the Reliance Foundation. The committee did **not find evidence of commercial exploitation**, but raised concerns regarding **documentation and due diligence** in some imports.
- **Concerns Highlighted:** The report noted **inconsistencies in verifying the origin of animals**, use of **incorrect source or purpose codes**, and lapses in **systematic record-checking**. It emphasized the need for India to ensure **full compliance with CITES regulations** during international wildlife transfers.
- **No Illegality Found:** The committee clarified that it did **not find proof of illegal trade** or imports made without required CITES permits; however, documentation gaps could lead to **future vulnerabilities or misinterpretation**.
- **Broader Implication:** The recommendation aims to **strengthen regulatory oversight** and prevent any possibility of **misuse of conservation or rescue permits** for wildlife trafficking, a concern shared globally.



Key Concepts

- **CITES:** An international treaty regulating trade in endangered species to prevent exploitation.
- **Due Diligence in Wildlife Transfer:** Ensures legal origin, welfare standards, and transparency in documentation; prevents illegal trafficking and laundering of captured wildlife.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions (India)

- **Article 48A:** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and wildlife.
- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental duty of citizens to protect wildlife.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Governs protection, management, and trade regulations of wildlife species.
- **CITES Compliance Mechanism:** India is a signatory and must ensure imports align with **internationally approved conservation and documentation procedures**.

Conclusion

The CITES committee's recommendation does not indict India for illegal wildlife trade but seeks **stronger oversight, clearer documentation, and consistent compliance**. Ensuring transparency and ecological ethics in wildlife imports is essential to maintain India's credibility in **global conservation leadership** and prevent any indirect facilitation of trafficking.



UPSC Relevance

Useful for **GS Paper 3** (Environment, Biodiversity Conservation, International Treaties), **GS Paper 2** (International Agreements & Domestic Implementation), **Essay** on sustainable conservation strategies. Can also be used in **Environmental Governance and Wildlife Protection** case studies in Mains and Interview.

12. Government Move to Review and Potentially Scrap Unviable Renewable Energy Contracts

Key Summary Points

- **Review of Unviable Contracts:** The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) has clarified that **renewable energy project contracts may be cancelled only if they are found unviable**, and **only after all viable alternatives are explored**. This applies to **Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)** and **Power Sale Agreements (PSAs)** that have not progressed.
- **Scale of Pending Agreements:** Nearly **43.94 GW** of renewable power capacity remains without PSAs signed by state **discoms**. Many discoms are **delaying PSA signing in anticipation of lower tariffs**, which is causing implementation delays in solar and wind energy projects.
- **Role of Central Agencies:** The Power Ministry has asked **SECI, NTPC, NHPC, and SJVN** to assess and possibly cancel contracts by November-end where PPAs/PSAs are not feasible. These agencies serve as **Renewable Energy Implementing Agencies (REIAs)**, acting as intermediaries between renewable developers and electricity purchasers.
- **Impact on National Targets:** Delays could affect India's goal to **add 50 GW renewable energy capacity annually**, reach **500 GW of non-fossil energy capacity by 2030**, and progress toward **net-zero emissions by 2070**. The government is working on **optimizing transmission capacity and reforming contracting frameworks** to avoid disruption.
- **Market Dynamics:** Falling solar and renewable tariffs and **surplus daytime solar power** in some states have reduced the demand for long-term PPAs, prompting discoms to wait for even lower prices, leading to contract stagnation.



Key Concepts

- **PPA (Power Purchase Agreement):** A long-term contract between a power generator and purchaser, securing revenue stability.
- **PSA (Power Sale Agreement):** Agreement between intermediary agencies and distribution companies to supply power procured from generators.
- **Green Shoe Option:** An option allowing partial reallocation or adjustment of contracted capacity to improve financial viability.

Constitutional & Policy Context

- **Electricity Act, 2003:** Promotes competition and efficiency in the power sector.
- **National Electricity Policy & Energy Transition Commitments:** Support expansion of renewable energy and reduction of carbon emissions.



- **Panchamrit Climate Commitments (COP26):** India's target of 500 GW non-fossil capacity and net-zero by 2070.

Conclusion

The government seeks to **balance contract viability, tariff stability, and renewable growth**. While cancellations may occur, they will be targeted—not blanket—and aimed at preventing inefficiencies and bottlenecks. Strengthening procurement frameworks and boosting state-level commitment is crucial for meeting India's long-term clean energy goals.

UPSC Relevance

Useful for **GS Paper 3** (Energy Policy, Infrastructure, Environment & Climate Goals), **GS Paper 2** (Centre–State coordination, Public Sector Governance), and **Essay** topics on **energy transition and sustainable development**. This can also be used as a **case example** in renewable energy policy discussions.
