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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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1. SC Recalls Verdict on Retrospective Green Clearances

Key Points:

- The Supreme Court (three-judge Bench) **recalled its May 16 verdict** that had declared **retrospective / ex post facto environmental clearances (ECs)** as “gross illegality”.
- **Majority opinion (CJI D.Y. Chandrachud? No — CJI B.R. Gavai & Justice K. Vinod Chandran)** held that allowing the earlier judgment to operate would cause **serious economic consequences** and lead to **wastage of projects worth thousands of crores**.
- The majority upheld **review petitions** filed by the Centre and developers, arguing that limited retrospective ECs may sometimes be necessary to avoid disproportionate harm.
- **Justice Ujjal Bhuyan delivered a strong dissent**, stating that the review overruns “fundamentals of environmental jurisprudence” and amounts to “**backtracking for the sake of violators.**”
- Justice Bhuyan emphasised that **environmental rule of law** and **precautionary principle** prohibit validating construction without prior EC, especially amid worsening air pollution such as **Delhi smog**.
- The dissent also noted that the Court’s role is to protect the environment, not to justify after-the-fact regularisation of illegal projects.



Important Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Right to life includes the **right to a clean and healthy environment** (Multiple SC rulings).
- **Article 48A:** Directive to the State to **protect and improve the environment**.
- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental duty of citizens to **protect the natural environment**.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Empowers Centre to issue environmental clearance notifications and regulate industrial activities.
- **EIA Notification 2006:** Mandates **prior environmental clearance** for specified activities; retrospective ECs are generally inconsistent with the “prior approval” requirement.
- **Precautionary Principle:** Part of India’s environmental jurisprudence (Vellore Citizens’ Welfare Forum case, 1996).
- **Polluter Pays Principle:** Basis for liability in cases of environmental harm.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **Environmental Clearance (EC):** Mandatory approval ensuring that a proposed project assesses and mitigates environmental impacts before commencement.
- **Ex Post Facto Clearance:** Granting EC **after a project has already begun or even completed**, effectively legalising prior violations.
- **Environmental Jurisprudence:** A body of judicial principles ensuring environmental protection through doctrines like sustainable development and precautionary principle.



- **Review Petition:** A request to the Supreme Court to reconsider its own judgment under **Article 137**.

Analysis & Implications

- The **majority view prioritises economic considerations**, large-scale investments, and the need to avoid halting completed structures.
- The **dissent reinforces environmental primacy**, warning against legitimising violators and dilution of environmental safeguards.
- The ruling reflects a broader debate: **economic development vs. environmental protection**, particularly relevant in urban construction and industrial projects.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's recall of the May 16 judgment marks a significant shift, placing economic implications over strict compliance with prior environmental clearance norms. The dissent reminds the judiciary and policymakers of the long-term ecological costs of regularising violations and the centrality of environmental rule of law.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS Paper 3 (Environment, Conservation, Pollution, Governance)**.
- Relevant for topics such as **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), environmental governance, constitutional provisions for environment, and judicial interventions**.
- Useful for **Mains essay themes**: development vs. environment, environmental rule of law.
- Prelims relevance: EC rules, EIA, important SC principles.

2. Centre Brings New Norms for Covering Crop Loss

Key Points:

- The Union Agriculture Ministry has introduced **new modalities under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)** to cover crop loss due to **wild animal attacks and paddy inundation**, long-standing demands of farmers.
- **Wild animal attack** has been recognised as the **fifth Add-on Cover** under the **Localised Risk** category.
- States will identify **wild animals responsible, vulnerable districts**, and insurance units using **historical data**.
- Farmers must report losses within **72 hours** via the **Crop Insurance app** with **geotagged photographs**, enabling transparent and verifiable claims.
- The new norms will be effective from the **2026 Kharif season**, giving states and insurers time to prepare mechanisms.
- The reform particularly benefits States with high **human-wildlife conflict**, including Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, MP, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, and northeastern States.





Additional Key Points

- Inclusion of wild animal attacks aligns PMFBY with **ground realities of crop damage**, especially near forest fringes.
- Recognition of paddy inundation supports farmers affected by **extreme rainfall**, increasingly common due to climate change.
- The reform is expected to enhance **risk coverage, financial resilience, and trust in crop insurance schemes**.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A:** Duty of the State to protect environment and wildlife; relevant for addressing human–wildlife conflict.
- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental duty of citizens to protect wildlife and have ecological compassion.
- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Regulates protection of wild animals; human–wildlife conflict mitigation is an implied responsibility.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Framework for managing natural disasters like inundation, indirectly linking to crop loss.
- **PMFBY Guidelines (2016, revised):** Provide for yield loss, prevented sowing, post-harvest loss, and now add-on coverage for wildlife attacks.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **PMFBY:** A government-supported crop insurance scheme providing financial support to farmers in case of crop failure due to natural calamities, pests, and diseases.
- **Add-on Cover:** Additional risk coverage beyond the standard insurance package, often state-specific.
- **Localised Risk:** Small-area losses such as hailstorms, landslides, inundation, and now wildlife attacks.
- **Geotagging:** Embedding location coordinates in images for authenticity and verification of claims.

Conclusion

The new norms under PMFBY mark a progressive step toward addressing **human–wildlife conflict** and **climate-induced crop risks**. By operationalising technological reporting and expanding risk coverage, the government aims to strengthen farmer security and enhance credibility of crop insurance mechanisms.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS Paper 3 (Agriculture, Food Security, Disaster Management, Environment)**.
- Relevant for topics: **PMFBY reforms, human–wildlife conflict, crop insurance mechanisms, climate-resilient agriculture**.
- Helpful for **Prelims (PMFBY structure, Add-on cover, Localised risk)** and **Mains (agricultural risk management, policy measures)**.



3. Manipur Governor Reviews Fencing Along Myanmar Border

Key Points:

- Manipur Governor **Ajay Kumar Bhalla** reviewed the progress of the **boundary fencing** project along the **398 km India–Myanmar border**, a sensitive stretch crucial for security.
- Senior officials briefed the Governor on **operational challenges, current status, and overall performance** of the fencing work.
- The review highlighted major concerns including **security vulnerabilities, communication gaps**, and logistical constraints affecting the pace of construction.
- Recommendations were put forward to ensure **faster, smoother, and more secure execution** of the remaining fencing work.
- The fencing project is significant in the context of **illegal cross-border movement, militant infiltration, smuggling**, and the ongoing **ethnic tensions in Manipur**.
- The review reflects the Centre and State's urgency in strengthening border management amid rising instability in Myanmar post-2021 military coup.



Additional Important Points

- India and Myanmar share a **1,643 km border**, with Manipur accounting for 398 km.
- The project aligns with the government's move to **revisit the Free Movement Regime (FMR)** due to increasing security concerns.
- Fencing aims to reduce trafficking of drugs and arms, and restrict insurgent groups operating across the porous border.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 355:** Duty of the Union to protect states from external aggression and internal disturbance—relevant for border management in Manipur.
- **Article 246 & Seventh Schedule (Union List):** Union's exclusive power over **defence, foreign affairs, and border security**.
- **Land Boundary & International Treaties Framework:** Managed under the **Allocation of Business Rules** involving MEA, MHA, and MoD.
- **Foreigners Act, 1946 and Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920:** Regulate cross-border entry and exit.
- **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA):** Operative in many border districts due to insurgency.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **Border Fencing:** Physical barriers erected to regulate and secure international borders against illegal movement and infiltration.



- **Free Movement Regime (FMR):** A bilateral arrangement permitting tribal communities to travel up to 16 km across the Indo-Myanmar border without visa restrictions.
- **Porous Border:** A boundary where movement is difficult to regulate due to terrain or socio-cultural linkages.
- **Border Management:** Integrated approach involving infrastructure, surveillance, patrolling, and coordination among agencies like the Assam Rifles and BSF.

Conclusion

The Governor's review signifies the strategic importance of the **Indo-Myanmar border** for national security, particularly in the context of insurgency, smuggling networks, and regional instability. Accelerated fencing and improved coordination are essential for strengthening border control and stabilising the situation in Manipur.

UPSC Relevance

- Crucial for **GS Paper 3 (Internal Security, Border Management, Insurgency, North-East Issues)**.
- Useful for understanding **India–Myanmar relations, border governance challenges, and security reforms**.
- Expected in Prelims: **FMR**, border lengths, agencies involved in Indo-Myanmar border security.
- Potential Mains themes: **porous borders, insurgency in the North-East, impact of Myanmar crisis on India's security**.

4. Mining Reform Plan Hits State Pushback

Key Points:

- Major mineral-producing states **Odisha and Goa** have opposed the Centre's proposed overhaul of **iron ore auction rules**, fearing **significant revenue loss**.
- The Ministry of Mines' plan includes **capping auction premiums at 50%** of the ore value (currently bids can exceed 100%) and **increasing upfront payments** for winning mining blocks.
- States argue that auction premiums constitute their **largest revenue source**, and restricting them will sharply reduce income—for example, a 100% premium on ore valued at ₹1,000/tonne brings ₹1,000/tonne to the state, but a 50% cap cuts this in half.
- Due to this pushback, reforms are **on hold**, and the high-level committee meant to steer the process has **not met for over two months**.
- Steelmakers and some states also oppose higher upfront fees, claiming it may **favour large integrated steel firms** and reduce participation by smaller miners.
- Odisha accounts for **over 50%** of India's iron ore production (FY24), and Goa over **4%**, making their objections pivotal.



Additional Important Points



- The reform aims to **boost domestic iron ore supply**, reduce price volatility, and promote **long-term sustainable mining**.
- Current auctions often result in **very high winning bids**, which later strain miners and may discourage long-term investment.
- Lowering premiums could help **captive mines**, but at the cost of reduced **state fiscal strength**.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 246 & Seventh Schedule (State List, Entry 23):** States have powers over **minerals development**, subject to Union regulation.
- **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act (MMDR Act), 1957:** Governs mineral auctions, royalties, premiums, and allocation procedures.
- **Mineral Laws (Amendment) Act, 2020:** Opened commercial coal mining and enabled seamless transfer of clearances.
- **District Mineral Foundation (DMF):** Mandated under MMDR to support mining-affected communities; revenue impacted if premiums fall.
- **National Mineral Policy 2019:** Calls for transparency, sustainability, and optimal resource utilisation through auctions.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **Auction Premium:** Extra amount a mining company bids **over the base price** for obtaining a mining lease; key revenue for states.
- **Upfront Payment:** Initial lump sum amount bidders must pay before mining operations begin.
- **Mining Lease:** Legal permit granting rights to extract minerals for a fixed duration.
- **Captive Mines:** Mines owned by industries (e.g., steel plants) for exclusive supply to their own facilities.

Conclusion

The reform plan highlights the delicate balance between **state revenues, industrial requirements, and market stability**. While the Centre seeks to rationalise premiums to encourage sustainable mining and reduce price inflation, states fear substantial financial loss. The deadlock reflects structural challenges in India's federal mineral governance.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS Paper 3 (Economy, Infrastructure, Natural Resources, Federal Issues)**.
- Useful for topics: **MMDR Act**, mineral auctions, Centre–State fiscal relations, revenue mobilization, resource management.
- Prelims relevance: key terms (DMF, MMDR Act, auction premium, captive mines).
- Potential Mains themes: **federalism in mineral governance, reforms in mining sector, balancing revenue with industrial growth**.



5. Russian Oil Discounts Rise as Refiners Shun Rosneft & Lukoil

Key Points:

- Discounts on Russian crude have **risen from \$1.7–4 per barrel (October) to \$5–6 per barrel** in the past two weeks as buyers avoid purchasing from **sanctioned companies Rosneft and Lukoil**.
- Global sanctions—especially by the **US OFAC, EU, and UK**—have targeted Russia's top oil companies to weaken its energy revenues amid the Ukraine war.
- India, though still Russia's **largest single-country buyer**, has **reduced dependence** on Rosneft and Lukoil; they accounted for **60% of Russia's oil exports to India in FY25**.
- Indian refiners are pausing new orders from these sanctioned firms and shifting to **smaller, non-sanctioned Russian suppliers**, leading to higher discounts to attract buyers.
- Analysts expect a **drop in Russian crude inflows to India** through December–January as OFAC-linked restrictions push refiners to rely on **blended barrels, opaque supply chains, and intermediaries**.
- Reliance Industries and other refiners are assessing compliance requirements under new restrictions but will follow **GoI guidelines** and international norms.



Additional Important Points

- Russia initially offered **up to \$30 per barrel discounts** in 2022 after its Ukraine invasion.
- Sanctions have now made crude associated with Rosneft/Lukoil a "**sanctioned molecule**", complicating procurement, transport, and payment channels.
- Nayara Energy, partially owned by Rosneft, continues to import Russian crude despite broader industry caution.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions (India Context)

- **Article 73 & 246 (Union Powers):** Union government has exclusive authority over **foreign trade, international sanctions, and petroleum import policy**.
- **Essential Commodities Act & Petroleum Ministry Regulations:** Guide pricing, supply, and compliance in the petroleum sector.
- **Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Act, 1992:** Governs India's foreign trade decisions and adherence to international sanctions regimes.
- **Customs Act, 1962:** Applies to import procedures, including oil consignments impacted by sanctions or special compliance conditions.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control):** US agency that enforces economic sanctions on foreign governments, companies, and individuals.
- **Sanctioned Entity:** A company or individual blacklisted under international sanctions, restricting trade, financial transactions, and logistics.



- **Blended Barrels:** Oil mixed from multiple sources to obscure origin, often used in sanction-heavy markets.
- **Opaque Channels:** Indirect, less transparent shipping and trading routes used to bypass sanctions.
- **Discounted Crude:** Oil sold below global benchmark prices to attract buyers amid reduced demand or geopolitical pressure.

Conclusion

Rising discounts on Russian oil reflect a shifting global energy landscape where **sanctions, geopolitical tensions, and compliance risks** are reshaping trade flows. India's refiners are recalibrating procurement strategies, balancing **cost benefits** against **sanction exposure**. The situation highlights how international politics significantly influences India's energy security and import patterns.

UPSC Relevance

- Key for **GS Paper 2 (International Relations — India-Russia, sanctions)** and **GS Paper 3 (Energy Security, Economy, External Dependence)**.
- Useful in topics on **global oil markets, sanctions impact, India's crude import diversification, and geopolitical-economic linkages**.
- Prelims relevance: OFAC, sanctioned entities, global oil pricing, types of crude discounts, India's major oil suppliers.
- Mains themes: **energy diplomacy, strategic autonomy, impact of sanctions on India's economy, Russia–West tensions & implications for India**.

6. India–US Economic Partnership Strong

Key Points:

- Union Commerce Minister **Piyush Goyal** reaffirmed that the **India–US economic partnership remains strong**, expanding across sectors and anchored in **democratic values, diversity, and shared development goals**.
- The US considers India a **trusted partner**, and both nations aim to deepen trade and investment ties while ensuring negotiations remain **fair, balanced, and protective of domestic stakeholders** such as farmers, fishermen, MSMEs, and local industries.
- On the proposed **India–US trade agreement/Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA)**, Goyal emphasized that talks are progressing, but India will only sign a deal that **protects national interests**.
- Goyal highlighted India's economic transformation—moving from the **“Fragile Five”** to becoming one of the **top five global economies**, with projections to become the **third-largest economy by 2027**.
- India's strong fundamentals—**low inflation, controlled fiscal deficit, robust banking sector, rising consumption, and GST-led formalization**—are driving growth and improving global investor confidence.





- India is ready to collaborate with US companies in **technology, AI, quantum computing, design, advanced manufacturing**, and aims to benchmark against **global standards** while moving towards becoming a developed nation.

Additional Important Points

- India's merchandise exports to the US rose **14.5% in October**, the first month-on-month increase in five months, despite the **US 50% tariff** on most Indian goods.
- India seeks **mutually beneficial, diversified economic engagement**, focusing on supply chain resilience, high-tech cooperation, and services exports.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions (Relevant to Trade & International Cooperation)

- **Article 73 & 246 (Union Powers):** Union government's exclusive authority over **foreign trade, treaties, and international agreements**.
- **Article 253:** Parliament can make laws to implement **international treaties and agreements**, including trade deals.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Governs India's international trade policies and agreements.
- **Customs Act, 1962:** Regulates tariffs, import-export compliance, and trade facilitation.
- **Special Economic Zones Act, 2005:** Facilitates export-led growth and foreign investment.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA):** A treaty between two countries to reduce barriers like tariffs and promote smoother trade and investment flows.
- **Trade Tariff:** A tax imposed on imported goods to regulate trade or protect domestic industries.
- **Fragile Five:** A term used for five emerging economies (including India) once considered vulnerable to capital outflows and macroeconomic instability.
- **Supply Chain Resilience:** The ability to withstand disruptions and maintain stable trade flows, a key focus in India-US cooperation.

Conclusion

The India-US economic partnership continues to deepen, reflecting strategic alignment, expanding trade, and shared technological priorities. India's strong recovery, improving macroeconomic indicators, and commitment to fair and balanced negotiations position it as a key global economic player. The partnership is expected to broaden across technology, manufacturing, services, and high-end innovation sectors.

UPSC Relevance

- Relevant for **GS Paper 2 (International Relations – India-US relations)** and **GS Paper 3 (Economy – Trade, Growth, External Sector)**.
- Useful for essays on **India's economic rise, strategic partnerships, and technology diplomacy**.
- Prelims relevance: trade agreements, macroeconomic indicators, export trends, "Fragile Five," India-US trade data.



- Mains themes: **global economic partnerships, trade negotiations, India's growth model, technology collaboration, and strategic economic diplomacy.**

7. Record Wheat Planting Likely as Soil Moisture and Prices Rise

Key Points:

- India's wheat acreage is expected to **increase by around 5%**, reaching a **record high**, driven by improved soil moisture due to **untimely October rains** and higher market prices.
- Farmers are shifting from **rain-fed crops** (such as coarse cereals and pulses) toward wheat because of better **profitability and assured returns**.
- Higher wheat planting is likely to **boost output**, helping stabilize or reduce **domestic wheat prices**, which have been elevated due to supply concerns.
- Increased production may enable the government to consider **limited exports of wheat flour**, after consecutive years of export restrictions.
- The expansion in acreage also supports the government's efforts to maintain adequate stocks for **PDS, food security schemes, and buffer norms**.
- Industry officials believe the favourable ecological and economic conditions will improve **wheat supply-demand balance** in the coming season.



Additional Important Points

- India is the **second-largest wheat producer globally**, and domestic food inflation has been sensitive to wheat availability.
- Untimely rains enhanced **residual soil moisture**, reducing irrigation needs in early sowing stages.
- Higher Minimum Support Price (MSP) and open market demand are incentivizing acreage expansion.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48 (Directive Principles):** Encourages the State to modernize agriculture and improve production.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Allows the government to regulate storage, movement, and pricing of key crops like wheat.
- **Food Security Act, 2013:** Requires sufficient wheat stocks for public distribution under NFSA.
- **Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Acts:** Influence wheat marketing and price realization at state level.
- **MSP Policy (administrative framework):** Supports farmers' income and influences cropping patterns.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **Acreage:** Total area of land sown with a particular crop.



- **Rain-fed Crops:** Crops dependent mainly on rainfall rather than irrigation (e.g., millets, pulses).
- **Residual Soil Moisture:** Water retained in the soil after rainfall, supporting early crop growth.
- **Buffer Stock Norms:** Minimum foodgrain reserves maintained by the government for food security and market stabilization.

Conclusion

With favourable soil conditions and rising wheat prices, India is poised for **record wheat sowing**, which could strengthen food security, stabilize inflation, and potentially reopen avenues for controlled wheat flour exports. The trend highlights how climate events and market signals collectively shape India's agricultural landscape.

UPSC Relevance

- Relevant for **GS Paper 3 (Agriculture, Food Security, Cropping Patterns, Inflation)**.
- Useful for topics on **MSP influence, impact of weather on agriculture, soil moisture dynamics, and export policy**.
- Prelims relevance: wheat as a rabi crop, factors affecting cropping patterns, MSP, Essential Commodities Act.
- Mains themes: **food inflation, agricultural diversification, climate-resilient farming, PDS and food buffer management**.

8. ICRA Pegs GDP Growth at 7% for September Quarter

Key Points (5–6 Bullets)

- Rating agency **ICRA** has projected **India's GDP growth at 7% for Q2 FY26**, lower than **7.8% in the previous quarter**, mainly due to **reduced government expenditure**.
- The agency expects **services and agriculture sectors** to exhibit **slower momentum**, influenced by seasonal and policy-related factors.
- **Industrial growth** is expected to remain strong, driven by manufacturing, construction, and core industries, supporting overall economic activity.
- Lower public spending, especially capital expenditure, is anticipated to temporarily weigh on the pace of GDP expansion.
- Despite moderation, the economy is projected to maintain **broad-based resilience** supported by domestic demand, improved capacity utilisation, and private sector activity.
- ICRA's estimates reflect the evolving macroeconomic outlook in the context of **inflation trends, monsoon performance, and global uncertainties**.



Additional Important Points

- Industrial activity continues to benefit from **PLI schemes**, robust infrastructure investment, and recovery in corporate earnings.



- Slower services sector momentum may be linked to **base effects** and normalization post-pandemic highs.
- Agricultural output concerns stem from **uneven monsoon patterns**, impacting kharif production.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions (Economy & Fiscal Governance)

- **Article 112 (Annual Financial Statement):** Guides government expenditure allocation influencing GDP trends.
- **FRBM Act, 2003:** Enforces fiscal discipline; affects levels of government spending.
- **Article 265:** No tax can be levied or collected except by authority of law—relevant for revenue mobilisation affecting fiscal space.
- **NITI Aayog's mandate:** Supports long-term growth strategies impacting sectoral development.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **GDP Growth Rate:** Measures the increase in the value of goods and services produced in an economy; key indicator of economic health.
- **Fiscal Consolidation:** Government efforts to reduce deficits and debt, often leading to curtailed spending.
- **Base Effect:** The impact of comparing current economic data to a previous period with unusually high/low values.
- **Industrial Output:** Production in manufacturing, mining, electricity—crucial for GDP and employment.

Conclusion

India's economy is expected to moderate slightly in Q2 FY26, but remains on a **strong and stable growth trajectory**. With robust industrial performance and resilient domestic demand, the outlook remains positive despite short-term pressures from lower government spending and sectoral slowdowns.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS Paper 3 (Indian Economy—Growth, Development, Fiscal Policy, Sectors of Economy)**.
- Useful for topics like **GDP trends, sectoral growth patterns, fiscal management, and government expenditure impact**.
- Prelims relevance: GDP concepts, FRBM Act, national income accounting.
- Mains themes: **drivers of growth, public expenditure, industry-led growth, macroeconomic stability in India**.

9. UN Security Council Backs Trump's Plan for Postwar Gaza

Key Points:

- The **UN Security Council** adopted a resolution backing President Trump's **postwar Gaza peace plan**, with **13 votes in favor** and **abstentions from China and Russia**.



- The resolution establishes the framework for an **International Stabilization Force (ISF)** and proposes a “**Board of Peace**” to serve as a temporary transitional government in Gaza and oversee reconstruction efforts.
- The mandate includes **demilitarizing Gaza**, controlling borders, and creating conditions for governance reform within the **Palestinian Authority**.
- The resolution introduces a conditional roadmap for **Palestinian statehood**, dependent on successful Palestinian Authority reforms and progress in Gaza’s reconstruction.
- Several Muslim and Middle Eastern countries, including **Egypt, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Jordan**, supported the resolution, and some expressed willingness to join the ISF.
- Hamas rejected the resolution, calling it “dangerous,” opposing **disarmament**, and resisting any move to place Gaza under international authority or allow foreign military presence.



Additional Important Points

- The US engaged in extensive **backroom diplomacy** with Arab and European states to revise the resolution text, inserting provisions on **Palestinian self-determination** and clarifying the Palestinian Authority’s role.
- Senior US officials, including Trump’s UN Ambassador and Jared Kushner, worked to build global support; the US continues to insist **no American troops** will join the ISF.
- Israel considers **Hamas’s demilitarization** a non-negotiable condition for peace; Hamas signaled limited willingness to dismantle heavy weapons if Israel fully withdraws and statehood guarantees emerge.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions (UN & International Law Context)

- **UN Charter Chapter VI:** Framework for peaceful settlement of disputes; informs political resolutions like the Gaza plan.
- **UN Charter Chapter VII:** Allows establishment of peacekeeping or stabilization forces with Security Council authorization (relevant to ISF).
- **Right to Self-Determination (UNGA Resolution 1514):** Underpins references to Palestinian statehood.
- **International Humanitarian Law (Geneva Conventions):** Governs conduct in occupied territories and post-conflict transitions.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **International Stabilization Force (ISF):** A UN-mandated multinational force intended to maintain security and support post-conflict governance.
- **Transitional Governance / Board of Peace:** Temporary administrative body replacing Hamas to oversee reconstruction and governance reforms.
- **Demilitarization:** Removal of weapons and military capabilities from Hamas and other armed factions.



- **Cease-fire Oversight:** Monitoring and implementation mechanism to maintain peace after an active conflict.

Conclusion

The UN resolution marks a major diplomatic milestone for Trump's proposed postwar Gaza framework, laying out structures for security, reconstruction, and possible political transition. However, **major uncertainties remain**—particularly regarding Hamas's disarmament, Israel's role, acceptance by Palestinian factions, and viability of the conditional path toward Palestinian statehood.

UPSC Relevance

- Highly relevant for **GS Paper 2 (International Relations — West Asia, UN Bodies, Peacekeeping)**.
- Useful for topics on **Israel–Palestine conflict, UN Security Council functioning, peace-building mechanisms, and geopolitical diplomacy**.
- Prelims relevance: UNSC voting rules, Chapter VI vs VII, peacekeeping mandates.
- Mains themes: **West Asia geopolitics, global conflict resolution, role of great powers in UN diplomacy, and statehood & self-determination debates**.

10. SC Reverses Retrospective Environmental Clearance Ban

Key Points (5–6 Bullets)

- The Supreme Court, in a **2:1 majority**, recalled its earlier **16 May Vanshakti judgment** that had prohibited the government from granting **retrospective (ex post facto) environmental clearances (ECs)** to projects violating green norms.
- **CJI B.R. Gvai and Justice K. Vinod Chandran** supported the recall, citing potential economic disruption, including the possibility of demolishing **public projects worth ₹20,000 crore** if retrospective clearances were invalidated.
- **Justice Ujjal Bhuyan delivered a strong dissent**, arguing that **ex post facto ECs have no basis in environmental law** and calling the concept an “anathema” to environmental jurisprudence.
- The matter has been **referred to an appropriate bench for fresh reconsideration**, signaling that the legal validity of retrospective ECs is unresolved but no longer barred outright.
- The majority cited the **2013 Notification** and **2021 Office Memorandum** of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), which allowed EC regularisation through **penalties**.
- Several senior advocates and government bodies had supported the review, arguing for practical flexibility in implementing environmental regulations.



Additional Important Points

- The May 16 judgment earlier held developers strictly liable for beginning construction without prior EC, strengthening regulatory enforcement.



- The recall highlights the tension between **environmental protection** and **economic/infra development interests**, especially for large-scale public projects.
- Nearly **40 review and modification pleas** were heard, reflecting broad industry concern.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Interpreted to include the **Right to a Clean and Healthy Environment**.
- **Article 48A:** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment.
- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental duty of citizens to protect the natural environment.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Empowers the Centre to issue EC norms and enforce compliance.
- **EIA Notification, 2006:** Mandates **prior environmental clearance**—the core principle undermined by retrospective approvals.
- **Precautionary Principle (SC 1996, Vellore Case):** Preventive approach to environmental harm, central to Justice Bhuyan's dissent.
- **Polluter Pays Principle:** Basis for penalties imposed under 2013 and 2021 EC regularisation schemes.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **Ex Post Facto Environmental Clearance:** Approval granted **after a project has already begun or completed**, retroactively regularizing violations.
- **Environmental Clearance (EC):** Prior approval required for projects with environmental impact, ensuring mitigation of ecological harm.
- **Environmental Jurisprudence:** Body of principles evolved through judicial rulings to balance development with ecological protection.
- **Review Petition (Article 137):** Mechanism allowing the Supreme Court to reconsider its own judgments.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's reversal marks a significant recalibration of India's environmental governance framework. While offering relief to industries and governments concerned about economic implications, it raises concerns over weakening **environmental rule of law**. Justice Bhuyan's dissent underscores the long-term ecological risks of legitimising illegal constructions through retrospective ECs.

UPSC Relevance

- Crucial for **GS Paper 3 (Environment, Pollution, Environmental Governance, Laws)**.
- Important for understanding **EIA process, judicial oversight, and precautionary principle**.
- Relevant for **GS Paper 2** topics on **judiciary, review powers, and Centre–State regulatory roles**.
- Prelims focus: EP Act 1986, EIA Notification 2006, environmental principles, SC judgments.
- Mains themes: balancing **environment vs. development**, judicial activism, environmental compliance challenges.



11. Rajasthan's Jalore to Get Inland Port

Key Points:

- The Centre, with support from the Rajasthan government, will develop an **inland port in Jalore district**, linking Rajasthan directly to the **Arabian Sea** through **Kandla Port (Gujarat)**.
- The port will be built along a **262 km inland waterway** connecting Jalore to the **Gulf of Kutch**, significantly enhancing trade and logistics efficiency.
- The project includes **dredging costs exceeding ₹10,000 crore**, aimed at enabling cargo movement and reducing dependence on **road and rail transport**.
- **IIT Madras** has submitted the **draft Detailed Project Report (DPR)**; the Rajasthan government is reviewing it, with final plans to be prepared after field visits and comments.
- Rajasthan is expected to provide **14 km of land** for the development of port infrastructure.
- The initiative is projected to promote **industrial development**, lower logistics costs, and integrate Rajasthan into major maritime trade routes.

Additional Important Points

- The project will strengthen connectivity for industries in Rajasthan, particularly **ceramics, textiles, minerals, marble, and agro-industries**.
- Development of inland waterways aligns with the **National Waterway Development Framework** and aims at **multi-modal transport integration**.
- It will ease pressure on congested highways and railway corridors in western India.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Union List (List I), Entry 24:** Covers shipping and navigation on inland waterways declared by Parliament as national waterways.
- **Union List, Entry 27:** Ports other than those declared as major ports are under Union regulation.
- **Inland Waterways Authority of India Act, 1985:** Governs development and regulation of inland waterways.
- **Article 246:** Gives Parliament exclusive powers over national waterways, ports, and shipping.
- **Major Port Authorities Act, 2021:** Regulates administration and functioning of major ports like Kandla.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **Inland Port:** A port located away from the coastline, connected through inland waterways, enabling cargo handling and maritime trade access.
- **Inland Waterway:** A navigable river, canal, or channel used for transporting cargo or passengers.
- **Dredging:** Excavation or removal of sediments from waterbeds to maintain navigable depth for ships and barges.
- **Detailed Project Report (DPR):** A comprehensive technical, financial, and environmental feasibility document required for major infrastructure projects.



Conclusion

The proposed inland port in Jalore is a transformative infrastructure project that will bring **maritime connectivity** to landlocked Rajasthan, reduce logistics costs, improve industrial competitiveness, and promote balanced regional development. It marks a major step in expanding India's inland waterway network and strengthening multimodal transport.

UPSC Relevance

- Relevant for **GS Paper 3 (Infrastructure — Ports, Waterways, Transport, Economic Development)**.
- Useful for understanding **inland waterways policy, port-led development, logistics efficiency, and regional development strategies**.
- Prelims focus: Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), major ports, DPR process, Union–State division of powers.
- Mains themes: **multi-modal transport, Blue Economy, reducing logistics cost, Make in India & industrial corridors**.

12. Time to Sort Out India's Cereal Procurement Mess

Key Points:

- A controversy in Tamil Nadu over **kuruvai paddy procurement delays, corruption allegations, and glut** has revived concerns about India's **overall foodgrain procurement system** dominated by rice and wheat.
- National data shows a **massive rise in paddy procurement**—119.86 lakh tonnes as of October 2025 (compared to 82.08 lakh tonnes last year)—resulting in **excess stocks far above buffer norms** (356.1 lakh tonnes vs norm of 102.5 lakh tonnes).
- Despite rice surpluses, India spends heavily on **imports of pulses (₹30,000 crore) and edible oils (₹1.2 lakh crore)**; domestic oilseed production remains stagnant even as demand grows.
- A structural imbalance exists: **procurement of wheat is insufficient** for PDS in some years, while procurement of rice remains far above offtake; meanwhile, **food subsidy exceeds ₹2 lakh crore annually**.
- The policy bias toward paddy and wheat—driven by **MSP assurance and assured procurement**—disincentivizes **crop diversification**, worsening dependence on oilseed and pulse imports.
- Fears of **PDS leakages**, fragmentation of procurement agencies, and weak institutional support (FPOs, cooperatives) highlight the need for deep reforms.

Additional Important Points

- Farmers prefer paddy due to **low risk, guaranteed MSP**, and lack of reliable markets for alternative crops like pulses/oilseeds.





- India imports 55% of edible oil needs, largely unchanged in decades, despite recommendations to expand domestic oilseed area and productivity.
- FPOs, SHGs, and cooperatives remain underutilized; successful models like **West Bengal's use of FPOs for paddy procurement** show potential.
- Calls for **area-specific market studies**, better extension services, and reducing knee-jerk export bans on rice to stabilize farmer incomes.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 38, 39(b):** Direct the State to ensure equitable distribution of material resources, relevant to food security.
- **Article 47:** Duty of the State to raise nutrition levels and standard of living.
- **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:** Mandates procurement, PDS distribution, and buffer norms for rice and wheat.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Regulates storage and supplies of essential commodities including cereals.
- **MSP & Procurement Policies (administrative):** Influence cropping patterns and create long-term structural distortions.
- **Model APMC Act & e-NAM:** Aim to modernize agricultural marketing but implementation remains uneven.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **Minimum Support Price (MSP):** Guaranteed price at which government purchases farmers' produce to ensure income stability.
- **Procurement:** Public purchase of foodgrains for PDS and buffer stocks.
- **Buffer Norms:** Quantity of grain required to be maintained to ensure food security and stabilize markets.
- **Crop Diversification:** Shifting from traditional crops (rice/wheat) to high-value or climate-appropriate crops like pulses, oilseeds, millets.
- **FPO (Farmer Producer Organization):** Collective of farmers for better market access, aggregation, and bargaining power.

Conclusion

India's cereal procurement system is caught in a **policy paradox**: persistent rice surpluses, inadequate wheat stocks in some years, and massive reliance on imports of pulses and edible oils. The current procurement-dominated model encourages **overproduction of paddy**, leading to fiscal strain, environmental stress, and market inefficiencies. A coordinated restructuring—focused on **crop diversification, strengthening FPOs, improving procurement design, and rationalizing subsidies**—is critical for long-term agri-food sustainability.

UPSC Relevance

- Highly relevant for **GS Paper 3 (Agriculture, Food Security, MSP, PDS, Subsidies, Crop Diversification)**.



- Useful for **Mains** answers on agricultural reforms, procurement challenges, MSP debate, import dependence, and sustainable cropping patterns.
- Prelims relevance: NFSA norms, MSP crops, buffer norms, PDS leakages, edible oil import figures.
- Also relevant for **Essay** topics on food security, agricultural sustainability, and economic efficiency.

13. What Local Bodies Can Expect from the 16th Finance Commission

Key Points:

- The **16th Finance Commission (FC)** submitted its report on November 17, focusing on two major expectations:
 - (1) **Vertical devolution**—the share of States from the Central divisible pool, and
 - (2) **Horizontal distribution formula** among States, as mandated under **Article 280**.
- A key mandate under **Article 280(3)(bb) & (c)** is to recommend measures to strengthen the **finances of Panchayats and Municipalities**, which currently face severe mismatches between revenue and expenditure responsibilities.
- Despite the 73rd and 74th Amendments, States assign responsibilities to local bodies **without matching revenue powers**, resulting in weak fiscal autonomy and dependence on higher tiers of government.
- **State Finance Commissions (SFCs)**—mandated every five years—have submitted over 100 reports but few have been implemented effectively, leading to inconsistent and inadequate devolution to local bodies.
- Previous **Union Finance Commissions (UFCs)** have failed to systematically estimate resource needs of local governments, often resorting to **ad hoc lump-sum grants** and discontinuous **performance-based grant conditions**.
- The 16th FC is expected to provide a **comprehensive assessment** of resource requirements for nearly **2.7 lakh Panchayats** and **5,000 Municipalities**, enabling them to function as true institutions of self-government.



Additional Important Points

- The 11th and 12th Schedules list subjects for Panchayats (29) and Municipalities (18), but these are **illustrative**, not binding—leading to wide variation across States.
- Local bodies implement most development schemes, yet they lack adequate fiscal powers such as **property tax, user charges, and market fee** autonomy.
- Performance grants of the 13th, 14th, and 15th FCs lacked continuity—each Commission introduced **new, unrelated conditions**, leading to poor compliance and ineffective reforms.
- The mismatch between functional responsibilities and fiscal authority undermines efficiency and service delivery at the grassroots.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 280:** Mandates the Finance Commission, including recommendations for strengthening local bodies.
- **73rd & 74th Amendments (Parts IX & IXA):** Constitutional status to Panchayats and Municipalities; creation of SFCs; mandates regular elections and fiscal decentralisation.
- **11th Schedule:** 29 subjects for Panchayats.
- **12th Schedule:** 18 subjects for Municipalities.
- **Article 243H & 243X:** Provide for taxation powers of Panchayats and Municipalities.
- **Article 243Y:** Mandates SFC reports and State-level action.
- **Article 266 & 280(3):** Provide financial architecture of devolution.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **Vertical Devolution:** Share of Central taxes transferred to States.
- **Horizontal Devolution:** Distribution among States using criteria like population, income distance, forest cover, etc.
- **State Finance Commission (SFC):** Constitutional body recommending State-to-local fund sharing and tax assignments.
- **Union Finance Commission (UFC):** Recommends transfer of Union tax revenue to States and augmentation of local body resources.
- **Revenue Handles:** Tax and non-tax powers assigned to a level of government.
- **Performance Grants:** Conditional transfers linked to reforms or service improvements.

Conclusion

India's local governance suffers from chronic fiscal weakness due to **inadequate devolution**, weak implementation of SFC recommendations, fragmented revenue powers, and inconsistent funding by UFCs. The 16th Finance Commission offers a critical opportunity to create a **coherent, stable, and adequate fiscal framework** for Panchayats and Municipalities, enabling them to perform mandated functions effectively.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS Paper 2 (Governance, Devolution of Powers, Local Bodies, Finance Commissions)**.
- Relevant for topics on **fiscal federalism, grassroots governance, 73rd & 74th Amendments, SFCs vs UFCs, and resource allocation**.
- Prelims focus: Article 280, Schedules 11 & 12, constitutional provisions for local governments.
- Mains themes: **strengthening local democracy, fiscal decentralisation, cooperative federalism, institutional challenges in decentralised governance**.



14. Amendments to the Protection of Plant Variety and Farmers' Rights Act

Key Points:

- The Union Government will amend the **Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Act (PPV&FRA), 2001**, with stakeholder consultations initiated by a committee headed by **Dr. R.S. Paroda**.
- The review aims to modernize the Act after 20 years, addressing **technological advances, changing trade dynamics**, and evolving needs of breeders and farmers.
- Key proposed changes include revising the **definition of "variety"** to include combination of genotypes, aligning with the **Seeds Bill, 2019**, and expanding the definition of **"seed"** to include vegetative propagating materials like tubers, bulbs, tissue culture plantlets, synthetic seeds, etc.
- Amendments being discussed include redefining "institution" within breeder definition (to include public and private entities), strengthening **DUS (Distinctness, Uniformity, Stability) testing**, and introducing a clear definition of **"abusive acts"** to penalize misuse of identical denominations.
- Farmers' groups are concerned that revisions may **enable seed monopolisation**, especially if community-developed seeds undergo DUS tests and get registered under private names.
- Civil society and analysts warn against shifting the Act towards stricter **IPR regimes** aligned with UPOV, which could undermine traditional seed-sharing practices and farmer autonomy.



Additional Important Points

- Farmer leaders demand mandatory registration of **community-developed seeds** and want safeguards ensuring these seeds remain under **community control**, not corporate ownership.
- Concerns include improper or non-transparent DUS testing (e.g., alleged irregularities in **njavara paddy** registration) and lack of clear compensation rules for **non-performance of protected seeds**, despite provisions in the Act.
- Global trends show countries experimenting with **open-source seed frameworks** to protect local biodiversity outside corporate IPR systems.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 19(1)(g)**: Right of breeders and farmers to carry out trade/business, balanced against public interest.
- **Article 21 & 48A**: Protection of farmers' livelihoods and biodiversity.
- **PPV&FRA, 2001**: Grants IPR protection to plant breeders while safeguarding **farmers' rights** to save, use, sow, resow, exchange, or share seeds.
- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002**: Regulates access to biological resources and protects traditional knowledge.
- **TRIPS Agreement (WTO)**: Requires sui generis plant variety protection systems; PPV&FRA is India's response.



- **UPOV Convention:** International system of plant variety protection—India is not a member, reflecting its farmer-oriented approach.

Definitions (Key Concepts)

- **PPV&FRA:** A sui generis law balancing breeders' rights with **farmers' rights to seed sovereignty**.
- **DUS Test:** Criteria required to register a variety—must be distinct, uniform, and stable.
- **Breeder:** Individual or institution involved in developing a plant variety.
- **Abusive Act:** Proposed term for actions violating variety denomination rules (e.g., marketing identical-named varieties).
- **Community-developed Seeds:** Traditional varieties improved or conserved collectively by farmer communities.

Conclusion

The proposed amendments seek to modernize the PPV&FRA framework in line with scientific advances while ensuring legal robustness. However, the reform process must carefully balance **breeders' innovation incentives** with **farmers' seed rights**, prevent privatization of traditional varieties, and avoid shifting towards stricter IPR regimes that undermine India's farmer-centric seed system.

UPSC Relevance

- High relevance for **GS Paper 3 (Agriculture, IPR, Biotechnology, Food Security)**.
- Useful for understanding **seed sovereignty, farmers' rights**, and international obligations under TRIPS.
- Important for prelims: PPV&FRA provisions, farmer rights, DUS testing, distinctions from UPOV.
- Mains themes: **agricultural reforms, IPR in seeds, community rights, climate-resilient seeds, and balancing innovation with equity**.