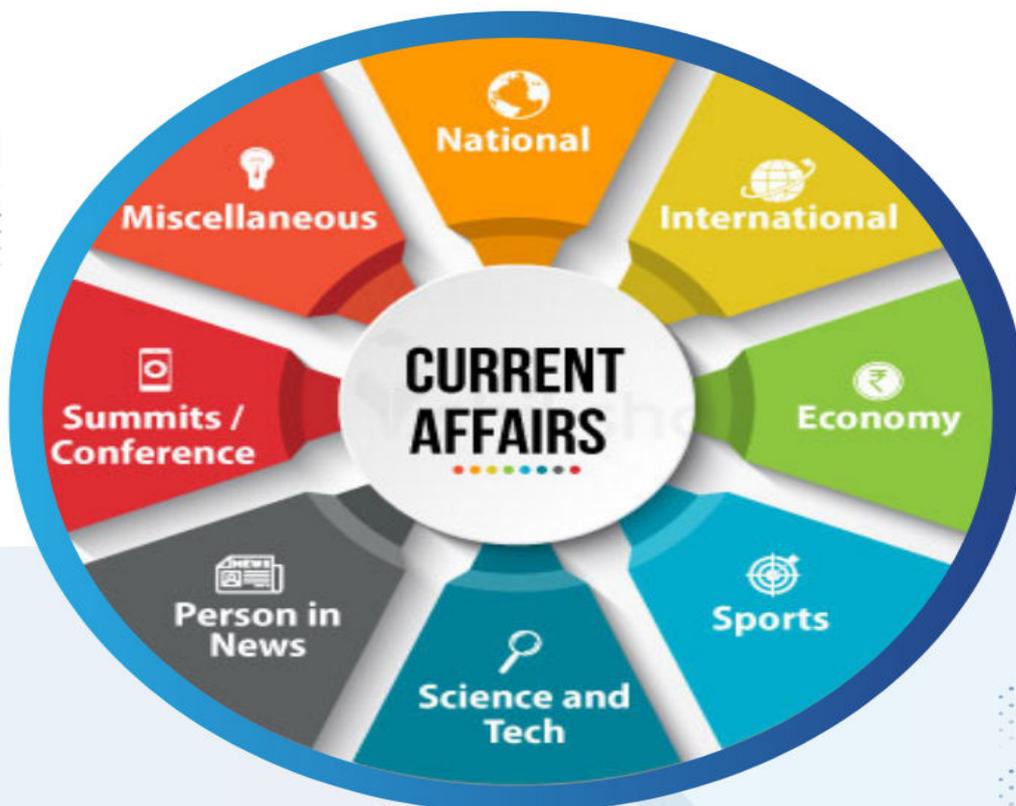"We help you reach for the star"

VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY
& STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 03/12/2025 (WEDNESDAY)

National
International
Economy
Sports
Science and Tech
Person in News
Summits / Conference
Miscellaneous

CURRENT AFFAIRS

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#317/A SKB Arcade, D. Subbaiah Road, Ramaswamy Circle, Mysuru-570004

Table of Contents

1. Increased Military Presence in Lakshadweep: Strategic Expansion

- **Strategic Expansion by Navy and Air Force:** The **Indian Navy (IN)** is establishing a new detachment on **Bitra Island**, expected to be fully operational by **next year**. The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** is expanding its current facility on **Agatti** and plans to build a new air base on **Minicoy**. This significantly enhances India's military footprint in the strategically located archipelago.

- **Enhanced Strategic Significance:** The increased military focus on Lakshadweep is driven by several critical factors:

  - **Heavier Shipping Traffic** passing near the islands.

  - **Chinese interest in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**, necessitating a stronger deterrent and surveillance capacity.

  - The growing **threat of Arabian Sea piracy**.

- **Measured and Environmentally Conscious Development:** Military expansion, particularly by the Southern Naval Command (SNC), is being undertaken in a **"measured way,"** acknowledging the **fragile ecosystem** of the islands. This implies balancing security needs with environmental protection and sustainable development.

- **Focus on Advanced Technology:** The IAF plans to incorporate **long-range cargo drones** capable of carrying heavy payloads into its expansion plans for logistics and operational support in the archipelago in the coming years.

- **Key Security Definition - Arabian Sea Piracy:** The threat of **Arabian Sea Piracy** refers to acts of robbery or criminal violence at sea, typically originating from regions like the Horn of Africa, targeting commercial shipping lanes, which necessitates enhanced maritime security presence.

- **Constitutional & Legal Provision - Defence of India:** Under **Article 53(2)** of the Indian Constitution, the **President of India** is the Supreme Commander of the Defence Forces. The Parliament, under **Entry 4 of the Union List (Seventh Schedule)**, has the exclusive power to legislate on matters of "Naval, military and air forces; any other armed forces of the Union." The deployment in Lakshadweep falls under the Union Government's mandate for the **Defence of India and its territorial waters**.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: The planned and ongoing military expansion in Lakshadweep by the Indian Navy and Air Force marks a proactive step to secure India's western maritime frontier and project power in the IOR. This strategic move directly addresses rising geopolitical challenges, increased maritime traffic, and regional security threats like piracy, while navigating the ecological sensitivities of the island chain.

UPSC Relevance: This topic is highly relevant for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper II (Polity/International Relations):** India's defence policy, strategic interests, and security architecture in the Indian Ocean.

- **GS Paper III (Security):** Challenges to internal security through external state and non-state actors (China's IOR presence, piracy), and various security forces and their mandate.

- **Prelims:** Location of Bitra, Agatti, and Minicoy Islands; commands of the Indian Navy (SNC); and constitutional provisions related to Defence.

- **GS Paper I (Geography):** Strategic geography and island territories.

2. Manipur Conflict: Kuki Body's Plea to NHRC

- **Request to Reject State Reports:** The **Kuki Organisation for Human Rights Trust (KOHRT)** has formally written to the **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)**, urging it to reject the **Action Taken Reports (ATRs)** submitted by the Manipur government regarding the ongoing ethnic conflict.

- **Allegation of State Complicity:** The core allegation made by KOHRT is that the government's reports demonstrate a **"systematic denial of institutional failure, ethnic targeting, and State complicity"** in the violence. The Kuki body claims that authorities ignored institutional breakdowns, concealed ethnically targeted attacks, and failed to prosecute widespread atrocities against the Kuki-Zo community.

- **Government's Stance:** The Manipur government, in its ATRs, explicitly denied the allegations, stating that claims suggesting the State "chooses to support and assist" militants/terrorist groups of the dominant community were **"wrong and misconceived."**

- **Key Demand - Independent Inquiry:** Besides rejecting the current ATRs, KOHRT has requested the NHRC to order an **independent judicial inquiry** into the alleged state complicity in the violence. The group has also sought directions for the immediate protection of Kuki-Zo properties and a recommendation for establishing a **separate administration** for the Kuki-Zo people.

- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions - NHRC:** The **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** is a **statutory body** established under the **Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993**. Its role (under Section 12 of the Act) includes inquiring into complaints of violation of human rights or negligence in the prevention of such violation by a public servant and recommending compensation or legal proceedings.

- **Key Word Definition - Action Taken Report (ATR):** An **Action Taken Report** is a formal document submitted by a government authority to a statutory body (like the NHRC or Parliament) detailing the steps and measures implemented in response to a prior complaint, recommendation, or order.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: The formal complaint by the Kuki body to the NHRC represents a critical attempt to escalate the accountability mechanism beyond the State government level, focusing on alleged systemic bias and institutional failure in handling the Manipur ethnic conflict. This highlights the deep mistrust between the affected community and the state machinery, necessitating intervention by national human rights institutions.

UPSC Relevance: This issue is highly significant for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** The role, functions, and limitations of **Statutory Bodies** like the **NHRC** and its ability to ensure accountability in cases of human rights violations and state conflicts. It also relates to issues of federalism and the failure of state machinery.

- **GS Paper I (Society) & GS Paper III (Internal Security):** Understanding the **ethnic conflict in Manipur** (Meitei vs. Kuki-Zo communities), its roots, implications for national security, and the issue of relief and rehabilitation for displaced people.

- **Fundamental Rights:** Violations of **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty)** and **Article 14 (Right to Equality)**, which form the basis of the human rights allegations.

3. Allahabad HC Order on SC Benefits after Religious Conversion

- **Judicial Directive on SC Benefits Post-Conversion:** The **Allahabad High Court (HC)** has directed the **Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) government** to take strict action against individuals who have converted to Christianity but continue to avail themselves of benefits meant for **Scheduled Castes (SCs)**, **Scheduled Tribes (STs)**, and **Other Backward Classes (OBCs)**.

- **Legal Rationale for Nullifying SC Status:** The court cited judicial precedents, including an order from the Andhra Pradesh High Court, which held that **caste-based discrimination does not exist within the Christian faith**. Therefore, the fundamental basis for SC classification, which is rooted in historical disadvantages within certain religions, is **nullified upon conversion** to Christianity.

- **Supreme Court Precedent - "Fraud on the Constitution":** The High Court relied on a **Supreme Court (SC)** observation that claiming caste-based benefits for reservation purposes after conversion to a religion that does not recognize the caste system amounts to a **"fraud on the Constitution."** This highlights the misuse of protective constitutional provisions.

- **Constitutional Provision - The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950:** The court specifically noted the provisions of **The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950**. This Order, as amended, specifies that **no person who professes a religion other than Hindu, Sikh, or Buddhist shall be deemed to be a member of a Scheduled Caste**. This is the key legal instrument defining the scope of SC reservation.

- **Case Context - Fraud and Enmity Charges:** The ruling was passed while dismissing a plea by an individual who, despite being accused of **"promoting enmity between two religious groups"** and **"outraging religious feelings,"** was found to have converted to Christianity but falsely claimed to be Hindu in court documents to retain benefits. The court directed the DM to act against him if found guilty of **forgery**.

- **Key Legal Definition - Forgery (as per IPC): Forgery** is a criminal offence defined under **Section 463 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)**, which involves making a false document or electronic record with the intent to cause damage or injury to the public or to any person, or to support any claim or title, or to cause any person to part with property, or to enter into any express or implied contract. Claiming a false identity or religion in official documents constitutes forgery.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: This ruling by the Allahabad High Court strongly reinforces the legal position that the benefits of Scheduled Caste reservation are intrinsically linked to the social and religious disabilities faced within the prescribed religions (Hindu, Sikh, and Buddhist). Conversion to other faiths, particularly Christianity, legally severs the entitlement to these benefits. The directive seeks to prevent the fraudulent appropriation of constitutional protections intended for the most marginalized groups.

UPSC Relevance: This topic is crucial for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper II (Polity and Social Justice):** It deals directly with the **Constitutional provisions for reservation** (Articles 15 and 16), the legal interpretation of **Scheduled Caste status**, the **socio-legal implications of religious conversion** on affirmative action, and the role of the **judiciary** in upholding the spirit of the Constitution.

- **GS Paper III (Internal Security):** The associated charges of **promoting enmity** (IPC Section 153A) and **outraging religious feelings** (IPC Section 295A) are relevant to internal security and communal harmony issues.

- **Prelims:** Focus on the **Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950**, the religions currently included/excluded, and the relevant Articles (15, 16).

4. Colombo Security Conclave (CSC): Strengthening Indian Ocean Security

- **Expanded Membership and Core Objective:** The **Colombo Security Conclave (CSC)**, originally a trilateral body (India, Sri Lanka, Maldives) founded in 2011, has significantly expanded, notably inducting **Mauritius (2022), Bangladesh (2024), and Seychelles (2025)** as full members, with Malaysia participating as a guest at the 7th NSA-level summit hosted by India in 2025. The CSC seeks to position itself as a critical forum to promote cooperation in the domain of **Non-Traditional Security (NTS)** challenges in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

- **Five Pillars of Cooperation (Key Areas):** The CSC framework focuses on cooperation across five crucial pillars, which are vital for IOR stability and security:

  1. **Maritime Safety and Security** (e.g., anti-piracy, search and rescue).

  2. **Countering Terrorism and Radicalisation**.

  3. **Combating Trafficking and Transnational Organised Crime** (e.g., illegal drugs, arms, and human trafficking).

  4. **Cybersecurity** and Protection of Critical Infrastructure.

  5. **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)**.

- **Definition of Key Term - Non-Traditional Security (NTS):** Non-Traditional Security (NTS) threats refer to challenges to the survival and well-being of states and peoples that arise primarily from non-military sources, such as **climate change, transnational organised crime (trafficking, piracy), pandemics, resource scarcity, and cyberattacks**. The CSC's focus on NTS aligns with the developmental priorities of its littoral member states.

- **India's Strategic Imperative and China Factor:** The CSC is a key component of India's **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)** vision, reinforcing its role as a net security provider. A primary challenge, however, is balancing India's security priority (anchored in the nature and extent of **China's presence in the IOR**) with the other member countries' view of China as a key **developmental partner**, which leads to a lack of complete convergence on the strategic threat assessment.

- **Institutional Structure and Resilience Challenge:** The CSC currently operates primarily at the **National Security Adviser (NSA)-level** structure, with a **Permanent Secretariat in Colombo**. A key challenge is the need to **institutionalise** the cooperation further (beyond the NSA level) to ensure consistency and resilience against domestic political uncertainties in member countries, which can risk the group's stability and momentum.

- **Legal Provision - UNCLOS (Relevant Context):** While the CSC is not created under it, all member states adhere to the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982**. The

CSC's focus on maritime safety, combating organised crime at sea, and protecting the marine environment directly supports the collective responsibilities and rights codified under UNCLOS regarding the security of international sea lanes and sovereign rights over Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ).

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: The Colombo Security Conclave has emerged as a significant minilateral mechanism, primarily driven by India, that is proactively constructing a cooperative security framework among key Indian Ocean littoral states. Its focus on non-traditional threats directly links security to the developmental and economic vulnerabilities of these island and coastal nations. The CSC's continued expansion and operational focus on its five pillars are vital for enhancing regional stability and maritime domain awareness, especially amidst the fragmented security architecture and rising geopolitical competition in the IOR.

UPSC Relevance: This topic is highly critical for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** India's foreign policy, 'Neighbourhood First' policy, and engagement with regional groupings like CSC in the context of the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)** and **Indo-Pacific** geopolitical dynamics (e.g., countering Chinese influence).

- **GS Paper III (Internal Security):** The role of transnational security cooperation frameworks in addressing **Non-Traditional Security (NTS)** challenges like maritime piracy, organised crime, cyber threats, and terrorism.

- **Prelims:** Membership (India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, Bangladesh, Seychelles), Secretariat location (Colombo), and the **five pillars of cooperation**.

🖥️ Regulating Non-Consensual Intimate Image (NCII) Abuse in the AI Era

- **The Challenge of AI and Privacy in a 'Fishbowl Society':** The proliferation of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, particularly in generating **deepfake** pornographic images, has turned society into a 'fishbowl' where the trade-off between convenience and privacy is stark. The resulting harm from **Non-Consensual Intimate Image Abuse (NCII)** goes beyond simple loss of privacy, encompassing psychological trauma, career stagnation, and permanent loss of autonomy.

- **Inadequacy of Existing Data and Enforcement:** There is a significant lack of contemporary, granular data on specific cybercrimes like NCII, as the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** aggregates all cybercrimes, obscuring the true extent of gendered violence. The response by the Ministry to the RTI query (citing "law and order" as a State List subject) highlights the challenge of fragmented data collection and the lack of unified, effective enforcement capacity across the country.

- **India's Foundational Legal Framework:** India has a normative framework for privacy, anchored by the **K.S. Puttaswamy judgment (2017)** which declared the **Right to Privacy** a fundamental right under **Article 21** of the Constitution. Other key laws include the **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000** and its **Intermediary Guidelines**, and the comprehensive **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023**.

- **MeitY's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (**MeitY**) issued an SOP on November 11, 2025, to curb NCII circulation. The SOP mandates content takedown within **24 hours** of reporting and outlines multiple reporting platforms (**NCRP, One Stop Centres**). Intermediaries must use **hash-matching and crawler technologies** to prevent re-uploads, making it a crucial first step towards victim-centric redressal.

- **Gaps and Need for a Dedicated Law:** The current frameworks are insufficient. A dedicated law is urgently needed that is **gender-neutral** (as the current SOP overlooks transgender victims, despite the Supreme Court's recognition of the "third gender"), establishes clear **accountability mechanisms**, defines **punishment**, and articulates specific regulations for the **tracing and generation of deepfakes**.

- **Key Legal Definition - Deepfake:** A **deepfake** is synthetic media (image, audio, or video) that has been digitally altered or generated using advanced **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, typically **Deep Learning** techniques, to convincingly depict individuals saying or doing things they never did. When used for NCII, it involves generating sexually explicit material without the depicted person's consent.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: While the recent MeitY SOP is a positive step in victim-centric response, India's overall legal and enforcement structure remains inadequate to handle the unique, severe, and proliferating threats posed by AI-generated NCII and deepfakes. A comprehensive, dedicated, and gender-inclusive law is essential to shift accountability onto platforms and AI developers, standardize police training, and ensure that the constitutional right to privacy and dignity is effectively protected in the digital age.

UPSC Relevance: This topic is exceptionally relevant for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance/Social Justice):** The status of the **Right to Privacy (Article 21)** post-Puttaswamy judgment; the role of **IT Rules/DPDP Act** in data governance; and issues of **gender justice** and violence against women in the digital space.

- **GS Paper III (Science & Technology/Internal Security):** The societal impact and regulation of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and **Deepfakes**; the challenges of **Cybercrime** investigation; and the role of bodies like **NCRB** and **MeitY**.

- **Prelims:** Key Acts (IT Act, DPDP Act), landmark judgments (Puttaswamy case), and the functions of the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP).

5. Shifting Blame: Delhi's Persistent Local Air Pollution Crisis

- **Farm Fires Decline, Local Sources Dominate:** The year 2025 saw a massive **90% reduction** in stubble burning incidents in Punjab and Haryana compared to 2021 (the lowest in five years). However, Delhi's **Air Quality Index (AQI)** remained stubbornly high ('Very Poor' to 'Severe'). The daily contribution of farm fires was mostly **below 5%** throughout the peak season. This disparity demonstrates conclusively that **local year-round sources** are the primary drivers of the capital's persistent pollution, not external episodic events like farm fires.

- **Toxic Cocktail of Vehicular Emissions:** The spikes in PM 2.5 levels in Delhi closely mirror the daily surge in **traffic-related emissions** of highly toxic gases like **Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)** and **Carbon Monoxide (CO)**, especially during peak morning and evening hours. This indicates that traffic, industry, construction dust, and waste burning are the persistent local factors creating a toxic cocktail under low-dispersion winter conditions.

- **Worsening and Proliferating Pollution Hotspots:** Pollution is not only intense but also widespread. Existing **hotspots** like Jahangirpuri ($\text{119 } \mu \text{g/m}^3$ annual PM 2.5) remain critically polluted, and several **new hotspots** have emerged (e.g., Vivek Vihar, Nehru Nagar). This suggests that control measures are failing to address pollution at the source across the city.

- **National Capital Region (NCR) as a Single Airshed:** The entire region, including smaller towns like Bahadurgarh (which experienced worse and more persistent smog episodes than Delhi), behaves as a **single airshed**. This demands a coordinated, legally binding **NCR-wide action plan** for emission control, rather than treating Delhi's air quality in isolation.

- **Judicial Intervention and Legal Framework:** The **Supreme Court (SC)** has actively intervened, cautioning against making farmers **scapegoats** and directing authorities to focus on long-term, comprehensive measures to address other major pollutants. The legal framework is spearheaded by the **Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021**, which established the **CAQM** as a **statutory body** with overarching powers to enforce compliance and manage pollution across the regional airshed.

- **Key Definition - Particulate Matter (PM 2.5):** PM 2.5 refers to **Fine Particulate Matter**, which are microscopic particles or droplets smaller than **2.5 micrometers** in diameter. They are the most harmful air pollutant as they can penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream, leading to chronic respiratory and cardiovascular diseases.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: The air quality crisis in Delhi-NCR is fundamentally a governance and structural problem rooted in the failure to enforce robust, year-round controls on local sources of pollution, primarily vehicular and industrial emissions. The continued reliance on blaming farm fires distracts from the urgent need for deep, high-impact interventions across the entire NCR airshed, requiring strong institutional action from the CAQM and consistent judicial monitoring.

UPSC Relevance: This topic is crucial for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Role of the **Supreme Court** in environmental governance; the working and mandate of **Statutory Bodies** like the **CAQM**; and challenges of **cooperative federalism** in inter-state environmental management.

6. The Evolving Geopolitics of the Russia-Ukraine Peace Process

- **Collapse of the 2022 Istanbul Framework:** Diplomatic talks mediated by Turkey in March 2022 nearly led to an interim settlement. The tentative agreement involved Russia withdrawing to its pre-war positions (retaining Crimea and parts of Donbas) in exchange for Ukraine renouncing **NATO** membership and receiving security guarantees from a group of countries. The process collapsed, reportedly due to Western hesitation to offer guarantees and the encouragement by leaders like then-UK PM Boris Johnson for Ukraine to continue fighting.

- **Trump's 2025 Peace Plan Outline:** A new, detailed **28-point peace plan**, circulated by the Donald Trump administration, is currently being pushed. This plan is viewed as less favorable to Ukraine than the 2022 proposal. Key territorial provisions include:

  o Recognition of **Crimea, Luhansk, and Donetsk** as **de facto Russian**.

  o **Freezing the line of contact** in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia (ceding territories Russia currently holds).

  o Ukraine enshrining in its Constitution that it **will not join NATO** and receiving NATO-style security assurances for up to 10 years.

- **Shifting Military and Political Realities:** Since 2022, the **facts on the ground** have dramatically shifted. Despite receiving advanced Western weaponry, Ukraine's 2023 counteroffensive failed, and Russia has made steady gains, notably capturing the strategic city of **Pokrovsk** in Donetsk. This military setback, combined with the loss of US "support as long as it takes" policy under a new administration, places Ukraine in a much weaker negotiating position.

- **Zelenskyy's Dilemma and Internal Pressure:** Ukrainian President Zelenskyy is facing pressure both externally (from the US to make concessions) and internally (political fallout from corruption scandals and the expiration of his term under martial law). He must now choose between accepting a deal that requires ceding territory and abandoning NATO aspirations (which risks political backlash at home) or risking further territorial loss in a prolonged, unsupported war.

- **Key Geopolitical Definition - Reverse Kissinger:** The article mentions the potential for the US strategic community to attempt a **'Reverse Kissinger'**. This term refers to a geopolitical strategy that attempts to draw Russia away from its deepening strategic partnership with China (the US's principal rival), reminiscent of Henry Kissinger's 1970s strategy of drawing China away from the Soviet Union.

- **Implications for NATO and Global Economy:** The Trump plan explicitly seeks to limit **NATO expansion** and initiate a dialogue between Russia and NATO on security issues. In return, Russia is promised reintegration into the global economy, including the potential lifting of sanctions and rejoining the **G8** grouping (from which it was expelled after the 2014 annexation of Crimea).

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: The Russia-Ukraine conflict has reached a critical juncture where the military option is closed for Ukraine, compelling it back to the negotiating table from a position of weakness. The new US-led peace proposal forces Ukraine to make painful territorial and security concessions that were not demanded in 2022, signaling a major shift in the trans-Atlantic consensus and likely setting the stage for a frozen conflict with Russia solidifying control over key Ukrainian regions.

UPSC Relevance: This topic is highly significant for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Analysis of the **Russia-Ukraine Conflict** and its global geopolitical implications (energy, food security, shifting alliances); the role of major powers (US, Turkey, UK, Russia) in conflict resolution; and the evolution of international organizations like **NATO** and the **G8/G7**.

- **GS Paper III (Internal Security/Economy):** The impact of **Economic Sanctions** on global trade and the potential for a strategic reversal in US-Russia relations.

- **Prelims:** Locations of annexed regions (**Crimea, Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, Zaporizhzhia**) and key multilateral groupings (**NATO, G8**).

7. Mandate to Disclose Information in the Upcoming Census

- **Legal Obligation for Disclosure:** The Union Home Ministry stated in the Lok Sabha that, as per the **Census Act, 1948**, a person is **legally bound to answer** questions asked by the enumerator "to the best of his knowledge or belief." This mandatory nature is derived from **Section 8(2) of the Census Act, 1948**.

- **Definition of Legal Mandate (Census Act):** The **Census Act, 1948** is the primary legal provision governing the conduct of the Census in India. **Section 8(2)** explicitly creates a **statutory obligation** on the part of the respondent to furnish accurate information to the enumerator, ensuring the reliability and comprehensiveness of the data collected.

- **First Digital and Caste-Based Census:** The upcoming Census is slated to be the **first digital Census** in India's history. Crucially, the Minister's response affirmed that this Census will also be the **first to enumerate caste** in Independent India, marking a significant policy and administrative step since the last comprehensive caste data collected during the British period.

- **Status of the Census Questionnaire:** The Office of the **Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India** is currently in the process of **finalizing the questionnaire**. Once finalized, the questions and details will be formally **notified in the official gazette** before the enumeration process begins.

- **Timeline and Enumerators (Practical Aspect):** Regarding potential clashes with school board examinations (as many enumerators are schoolteachers), the Ministry stated that the timeline for Census 2027 has been kept the same as **past practices**, where primarily **school teachers are appointed as enumerators**. This addresses the logistical challenge of deploying over a million personnel.

SECTION 15
Records of census not open to inspection or admissible in evidence

- **Constitutional Provision - Union List:** The **Census** is a subject mentioned in **Entry 69 of the Union List** in the **Seventh Schedule** of the Constitution of India. This means that the **Parliament** (Union Government) has the exclusive power to legislate and conduct the Census, reinforcing the legal framework provided by the Census Act, 1948.
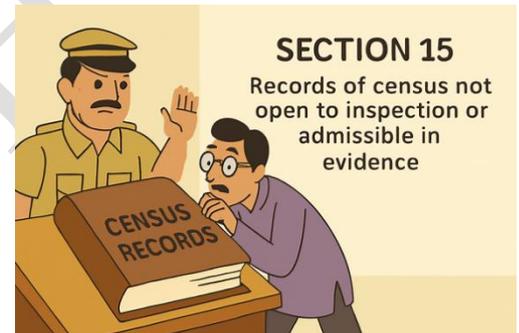
Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: The Union Government's clarification reinforces the statutory obligation under the Census Act for citizens to provide information accurately, including caste details. The upcoming Census is poised to be a landmark exercise—being both digital and the first post-Independence enumeration of caste—which holds profound implications for data-driven policy, social engineering, and the allocation of resources and representation across the country.

UPSC Relevance: This topic is extremely relevant for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance/Social Justice):** The constitutional and legal framework of the **Census of India** (Union List, Census Act, 1948); the debate and implications of a **Caste Census** for reservation, social equity, and political representation; and the role of the **Registrar General of India**.

- **GS Paper I (Society):** Understanding the impact of the caste system on Indian society and the use of census data for sociological studies and historical analysis.

- **Prelims:** Focus on **Section 8(2) of the Census Act, 1948**, **Entry 69 of the Union List**, and the features of the upcoming Census (digital, caste enumeration).

8. India's Leading Position in Global Mobile Data Consumption

- **Highest Global Mobile Data Usage:** The region comprising **India, Nepal, and Bhutan** (with India accounting for almost all subscriptions) has the **highest average mobile data usage** globally. The average smartphone user in this region consumes approximately **36 GB of mobile data per month**, significantly surpassing the global average of **21 GB** per month.

- **Rapid Growth and Future Projection:** The current high monthly usage of **36 GB** is an increase from **33 GB** recorded in the previous year. This rapid growth trajectory is projected to continue, with monthly consumption expected to nearly double to **65 GB per month by 2031**. This trend underscores the increasing digitization and reliance on mobile connectivity in the region.

- **Key Driver of Digital Economy:** This massive data consumption is a direct indicator of India's fast-growing **Digital Economy** and the success of government initiatives like **Digital India** and **Aatmanirbhar Bharat**. High data usage enables greater participation in e-commerce, digital financial services (**UPI**), ed-tech, and health-tech, fostering economic inclusion.

- **Role of Affordable Tariffs and $4G/5G$ Adoption:** The surge in data consumption is largely facilitated by the **world's most affordable mobile data tariffs** and the aggressive deployment and rapid adoption of $4G$ and $5G$ technologies. This combination makes high-speed internet accessible to a vast population base, driving the demand for data-intensive applications like video streaming and social media.

- **Definition of Key Term - Digital Divide:** The concept of the **Digital Divide** refers to the gap between demographics and regions that have access to modern information and communications technology (ICT), like high-speed mobile internet, and those that lack it. India's high mobile data usage, driven by affordability, is key to bridging this divide and promoting **Digital Inclusion**.

- **Constitutional & Policy Context - Right to Internet:** While not explicitly a fundamental right, access to the internet has been recognized by the **Supreme Court of India** (in the *Faheema Shirin v. State of Kerala* case, 2020) as a fundamental right derived from the **Right to Education (Article 21A)** and the **Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression (Article 19(1)(a))**. Robust mobile data usage supports the practical realization of this right.
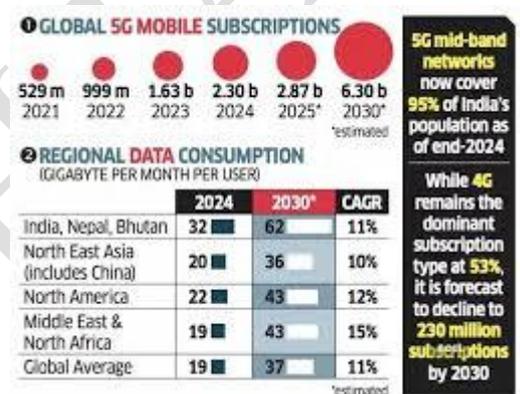
Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: The statistics confirm India's unprecedented mobile data revolution, positioning it as the leading consumer of mobile data globally. This technological leap has profound socio-economic implications, serving as both a benchmark of digital empowerment and a foundational requirement for sustaining high-growth rates across the digital economy, though it requires continuous policy focus on infrastructure and data security.

UPSC Relevance: This topic is highly significant for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Government schemes like **Digital India** and the judicial interpretation of the **Right to Internet Access (Article 19 & 21)**.

- **GS Paper III (Economy & Science and Technology):** The growth of the **Digital Economy** (e-commerce, fintech); the role of **telecommunication infrastructure ($4G/5G$ adoption)**; **Internet penetration**; and addressing the **Digital Divide**.

- **Prelims:** Facts on global data consumption and key government initiatives related to digitization.

9. IMF's 'C' Rating and Structural Issues in India's GDP Data

- **IMF 'C' Rating and Surveillance Concern:** The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** has assigned India's Gross Domestic Product (**GDP**) data a **'C' rating**, meaning the data has **"some shortcomings that somewhat hamper surveillance"** of the economy. This places India and China as the only two prominent high-growth economies with inadequate or suspect GDP data quality. The rating is part of the IMF's annual **Article IV Consultations**.

- **Outdated Base Year and Deflator Flaws:** A fundamental issue is the use of an **outdated base year (2011-12)**, which fails to capture the significant structural changes in the Indian economy (like the rise of digital services and changes in consumption patterns). Furthermore, India's use of the **Wholesale Price Index (WPI)** as a deflator for several sectors, particularly services, instead of the recommended **Producer Price Index (PPI)** or **double deflation** method, is considered inappropriate and can exaggerate **real GDP growth** when nominal growth is low.

   - **Key Definition - GDP Deflator:** The **GDP Deflator** is an economic metric that accounts for inflation by converting **Nominal GDP** (measured at current market prices) into **Real GDP** (measured at constant prices, i.e., adjusted for price changes). An inappropriate deflator can misrepresent actual production volume.

- **High Discrepancies and Informal Sector Under-coverage:** The GDP data frequently shows **huge mismatches (discrepancies)** between the **Production Approach** (Gross Value Added or GVA) and the **Expenditure Approach** (Consumption, Investment, Trade) of estimation. In the specific quarter, nearly half of the economic momentum was unassigned to proper expenditure heads. This discrepancy indicates inadequate data coverage, especially the difficulty in accurately measuring the vast **informal sector** of the economy.

Among key economies, China and India stand out with inadequate GDP data quality

Ratings by the IMF on economic data quality, select economies

	Overall	GDP
India	B	C
World's biggest economies		
US	A	A
China	B	C
Germany	A	A
Japan	A	A
UK	A	A
Emerging economies		
Brazil	A	A
Vietnam	C	A
Indonesia	B	B
Thailand	A	A

Ratings for IMF surveillance range from "A" to "D", where "A" indicates adequate data, "B" indicates some shortcomings but broadly adequate, "C" indicates shortcomings that somewhat hamper surveillance, and "D" indicates serious shortcomings that significantly hamper surveillance.

Source: Article IV Staff Reports, International Monetary Fund

- **Impending Statistical Overhaul and New Series:** The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (**MoSPI**) is planning a long-overdue overhaul, aiming to launch a **new GDP series by the end of February 2026**. This series is expected to use a more recent base year (likely 2022-23), incorporate updated data sources like the **MCA-21 database** (or potentially **GST data**) for the corporate sector, and utilize regular surveys for the informal sector, which should improve the IMF's rating.

- **Need for Continuous Improvement (Way Forward):** While the new series is a major step, challenges like the consistent implementation of the **double deflation method** and the formulation of a **Producer Price Index (PPI)** may persist. Experts stress that India must be agile in statistical upgrades and avoid long gaps, as another revision will be necessary once the delayed **Population Census** data is finally released (expected to replace old population projections).

- **Constitutional and Institutional Provision:** The collection and compilation of economic statistics, including the National Accounts (GDP/GVA), is the responsibility of the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** under the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**, operating

within the framework and guidance of the **National Statistical Commission (NSC)**, which is mandated to ensure methodological quality and public trust in official statistics.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: The IMF's 'C' rating is not a reflection of India's economic performance but a technical indictment of its statistical methodology, primarily concerning the outdated base year, flawed deflation techniques, and coverage gaps, particularly in the informal sector. Addressing these structural data quality issues is critical not only for global credibility but also for ensuring that domestic policymakers (like the RBI) have reliable numbers for effective monetary and fiscal policy formulation.

UPSC Relevance: This topic is highly critical for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper III (Economy):** Concepts of **GDP, GVA, Nominal vs. Real GDP**, and the **GDP Deflator**; issues related to **National Account Statistics**; the role of the **Informal Sector**; and institutional bodies like the **NSO, MoSPI, and NSC**.

- **GS Paper II (Governance):** The importance of reliable data for evidence-based policymaking and the governance challenges in statistical reforms.

- **Prelims:** Key economic metrics (WPI, PPI), the current GDP base year, and the IMF's data adequacy assessment system.

10. SC Raises Questions on Procedural Rights of Illegal Migrants (Rohingya)

- **Supreme Court's Core Question on Due Process:** The Supreme Court (SC) questioned whether individuals who enter India **"illegally"** can legally demand that full procedural safeguards, such as the issuance of a show-cause notice, provision of food and shelter, and protection of their children's rights, be applied before their **deportation**. The Court's oral remarks focused on the legal standing of **"intruders"** versus the extent of rights applicable under Indian law.

- **Context of the Case - Habeas Corpus Petition:** The SC was hearing a **Habeas Corpus petition** filed by rights activist Rita Manchanda, who alleged the **disappearance** of several Rohingya persons from the custody of the Delhi Police. The petitioner contended that their deportation, if carried out, must have followed the **due process** prescribed under Indian law.

- **Security and Intruder Status:** The Chief Justice emphasized the **security considerations** inherent to India's sensitive borders. The Court implied that granting full rights and a "red carpet welcome" to individuals lacking legal status as refugees who are considered **"intruders"** could compromise national security, especially given the sensitive nature of the northern borders.

- **Petitioner's Stand on Deportation:** The petitioner's counsel clarified that they were **not opposing deportation** *per se*, acknowledging the State's right to deport illegal migrants. However, they insisted that any such exercise, whenever undertaken, must be done **strictly in accordance with the law** and established legal procedures.

- **Key Constitutional & Legal Provisions - Article 21 & Foreigners Act, 1946:**

- **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty):** This right is available to *every person*, not just citizens, in India. The applicability of **due process** under Article 21 to illegal migrants before deportation is a core legal question, generally requiring a fair hearing or procedure.

- **The Foreigners Act, 1946:** This Act gives the Central Government the power to regulate the entry, stay, and exit of foreigners in India. Section 3 empowers the government to issue orders for the deportation of a foreigner.

- **Key Legal Definition - Habeas Corpus: Habeas Corpus** (Latin for 'you may have the body') is a writ issued by a court requiring a person under arrest or detention to be brought before the court to secure their release if the detention is found to be illegal or unjustified. In this context, it was used to demand information on the location and status of the detained Rohingya.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: The Supreme Court's deliberations highlight the complex legal and ethical tightrope walk for the State between fulfilling its constitutional obligation to uphold fundamental rights (like due process under Article 21, available to all persons) and its sovereign responsibility to protect national security by managing the influx and presence of illegal migrants, particularly those like the Rohingya, who lack formal refugee status under Indian law.

UPSC Relevance: This topic is highly significant for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance/IR):** The intersection of **Fundamental Rights (Article 21)** with the **Foreigners Act, 1946**; the role of the **Supreme Court (SC)** and **Writ Jurisdiction (Habeas Corpus)**; and India's policy toward **refugees and illegal migrants** (e.g., Rohingya crisis).

- **GS Paper III (Internal Security):** The challenges posed by **illegal immigration** on border management, demographic balance, and **national security** considerations.

- **Prelims:** Knowledge of the **Foreigners Act, 1946**, **Article 21**, and the concept of **Habeas Corpus**.

11. Rupee's Depreciation: RBI Intervention and Global Headwinds

- **New All-Time Low and RBI Intervention:** The Indian Rupee (**INR**) hit a new all-time low of ₹89.87 per US Dollar (USD), briefly nearing the ₹90 mark. The currency's slide was reportedly capped by the timely intervention of the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, which sold USD through state-owned banks. The RBI intervenes to **maintain orderly market conditions** and curb excessive volatility, rather than target a specific exchange rate.

- **Global Carry Trade Unwinding as a Key Pressure:** The depreciation is heavily influenced by the **weakening of global carry trade inflows**. Traditional low-interest capital suppliers, such as the US and Japan, are now grappling with **elevated interest rates**. This environment restricts new low-cost capital from flowing into emerging markets like India and, critically, raises the risk of **unwinding existing carry trade positions**, increasing pressure on the Rupee.

  - **Key Definition - Carry Trade:** Carry trade is a foreign exchange strategy where investors **borrow in a currency with a low interest rate** (the funding currency) and **invest in a currency with a high interest rate** (the target currency) to profit from the difference in interest rates. When funding currency rates rise (like in the US), the trade becomes less profitable, leading to an **unwind** (selling the target currency and buying back the funding currency).

- **Multiple Pressure Points (Importers & FPIs):** The Rupee's fall is driven by a combination of strong **demand from importers** (who need to buy USD to pay for goods, increasing USD demand) and **selling by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs)** (who are exiting domestic equity and debt markets, leading to USD outflow). These factors reflect ongoing pressures on India's **external balance** (Current Account Deficit).

- **RBI's Tools and Methods of Intervention:** The RBI manages the exchange rate through market operations, primarily by **selling USD** from its **Foreign Exchange (Forex) Reserves** to increase the supply of USD and curb the Rupee's fall. The RBI uses both the **spot market** (current exchange rate) and the **offshore Non-Deliverable Forwards (NDF) market** for intervention to manage volatility and signal its stance, often using state-owned banks as its agents.

Downtime
Market participants believe rupee's course will be set by global carry trade, external balance, RBI approach.
Rupee slides to an all-time low against the US dollar
Source: Bloomberg
GOPAKUMAR WARRIER/MINT

- **Forward Market Signalling and Future Trajectory:** The **offshore non-deliverable forwards (NDF) market** briefly breached the $\text{₹90}/\text{USD}$ mark, acting as an early indicator of future depreciation expectations. The immediate trajectory of the Rupee is therefore dependent on the complex interplay between global financial market dynamics, India's external economic health, and the degree of **decisive intervention** by the RBI.
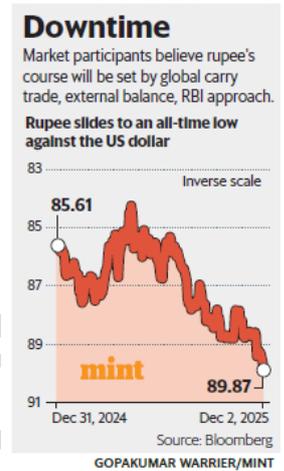
Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: The Indian Rupee's slide to a record low is a symptom of severe global liquidity tightening, driven by high interest rates in developed economies, coupled with persistent domestic pressures from import demand and capital outflows. While the RBI's intervention is critical for managing short-term volatility and maintaining market confidence, the long-term stability of the Rupee will depend on improving India's fundamental external balance and the stabilization of global interest rate differentials.

UPSC Relevance: This topic is highly critical for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper III (Economy):** Understanding **Foreign Exchange Management** and the role of the **RBI** (custodian of Forex Reserves, intervention tools); concepts like **Exchange Rate Determination** (market-determined), **Current Account Deficit (CAD)**, **Capital Flows (FPIs)**, and **Global Financial Linkages** (e.g., Carry Trade).

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** The role of the central bank in maintaining economic and financial stability and managing inflation (a weaker Rupee makes imports, including crude oil, more expensive, leading to imported inflation).

- **Prelims:** Key terms like **NDF Market, Carry Trade, Forex Reserves**, and the methods of RBI's currency intervention.

12. Standardization Overhaul: Balancing Quality Control and Ease of Business

- **Withdrawal of QCOs to Ease Supply Chain Friction:** The government has made a major policy shift by withdrawing 22 **Quality Control Orders (QCOs)**, primarily covering **petrochemical intermediates** such as p-xylene, toluene, and vinyl chloride monomer. These QCOs, which mandated compulsory **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** certification, had created compliance delays, raised input costs, and caused **supply chain bottlenecks** for downstream industries like plastics, textiles, and adhesives. The rollback is intended to restore **ease of doing business** for manufacturers, especially **MSMEs**.

- o **Key Definition - Quality Control Order (QCO):** A QCO is a mandatory regulation issued by the government, typically under the **BIS Act, 2016**, requiring specified products (domestic or imported) to conform to relevant **Indian Standards** and obtain a BIS license before being sold. They are legally binding and non-compliance is punishable.

- **Modernization and Upgrading of Critical Standards:** Simultaneously with the withdrawals, the government has issued a fresh set of **upgraded standards** across critical sectors, including **telecom networks, fibre optics, lifts, domestic gas stoves, and cybersecurity**. This dual approach aims to create a more **balanced regulatory environment**: removing difficult-to-implement standards on raw materials while **tightening standards** where public safety, national security, and essential infrastructure are concerned.

- **Impact on External Trade and Global Alignment:** The withdrawal of QCOs on intermediate goods is seen as a move towards **global alignment** of India's quality control regime, as most major economies do not mandate national certification on such inputs. The move is expected to support **Indian exporters** by providing easier access to globally certified inputs, thereby enhancing their **global competitiveness** in manufacturing sectors like textiles and plastics.

- **BIS Act, 2016, and Institutional Mandate:** The **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)** is the National Standards Body of India, established under the **BIS Act, 2016**. While its certification scheme is generally voluntary, the government issues QCOs based on public interest, human/animal/plant health, safety, and national security, making compliance mandatory. The recent reform flows from recommendations of a high-level committee (e.g., the **Gauba Committee**) which reviewed the practical impact of the rapidly expanded QCO regime.

- **Risk of Dumping and Need for Surveillance:** While the withdrawal is largely welcomed, experts warn of the potential risk of an **import surge** or **dumping** of low-grade or excess stock, particularly from countries with overcapacity (like China). Therefore, there is a strong need for the government to maintain **strong surveillance architecture** and rely on alternative protection mechanisms like **anti-dumping duties** or **safeguard actions** to protect vulnerable domestic industries.

- **New Telecom and Cybersecurity Focus:** The simultaneous focus on revamping **telecom and cybersecurity standards** is critical given India's massive digital expansion. This is linked to securing national digital infrastructure and implementing provisions under the **Telecommunications Act, 2023** and related rules, which focus on enhancing network security, addressing digital fraud, and protecting user data.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Conclusion: India's recent standards overhaul marks a significant pivot from a protectionist-leaning quality regime to a more rationalized, industry-aware framework. By revoking QCOs that created friction on raw materials and simultaneously modernizing standards in critical sectors like telecom, India aims to reduce compliance burdens, boost manufacturing competitiveness, and align with global trade norms while ensuring high quality and safety where it matters most.

UPSC Relevance: This topic is crucial for the **UPSC Civil Services Exam** under:

- **GS Paper III (Economy & Science and Tech): Industrial Policy** and its impact on manufacturing; role of **Standardization Bodies (BIS)**; **Ease of Doing Business** index components; impact of **Quality Control** regulations on **Supply Chains** and **MSMEs**; and policy shifts in **Telecommunications and Cybersecurity**.

- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Regulatory reforms and the principle of **'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance'**; statutory bodies under the **BIS Act, 2016**.

- **Prelims:** Understanding **QCOs**, the **BIS Mark**, and the **BIS Act, 2016**.