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# VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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## 1. Hornbill Festival & Development Thrust in Nagaland

### Key Highlights of the Event

- **High-Level Participation:** A Union Minister for Communications & DoNER (Development of North Eastern Region) participated in the renowned **Hornbill Festival** in **Nagaland**, signaling the Central Government's focus on the state's cultural and developmental integration.
- **Global Outreach:** The festival achieved significant international recognition with **Switzerland, Ireland, and the United Kingdom** joining as official **Partner Countries** for the 2025 edition, highlighting the success of **cultural diplomacy** and the increasing global profile of the Northeast.
- **Cultural Preservation:** Held at the **Kisama Heritage Village**, the event is a vibrant platform celebrating the living heritage, **tribal traditions, and cultural brilliance** of Nagaland's **17 tribes**, featuring indigenous games, music, and the iconic Angami stone-pulling ceremony.
- **Major Development Package:** A substantial development package of nearly **₹650 crore** was unveiled under the Ministry of DoNER, dedicated to accelerating growth in critical sectors like **healthcare, sports, power, education, and road corridors** across Nagaland.
- **Strategic Policy Implementation:** The visit reinforced the Prime Minister's '**Act East, Act Fast, Act First**' vision, which aims to transform the Northeast into "**India's first frontier to the world**" by pushing **unprecedented speed** in infrastructural development (airports, highways, telecom).
- **Community Engagement:** During the visit, the dignitary engaged deeply with local artisans, entrepreneurs, and cultural practitioners, including observing the crafting of the **Naga Dao** and participating in the weaving of the **Naga Khu (basket)**, emphasizing community-led cultural preservation.



### Important Keypoints & Definitions

- **Hornbill Festival (Festival of Festivals):** The annual cultural showcase of Nagaland (held Dec 1st–10th), designed by the State Government to preserve and promote the cultural heritage of all 17 Naga tribes and encourage **inter-tribal harmony**.
- **Act East Policy:** The core foreign policy initiative emphasizing economic, strategic, and cultural engagement with the Asia-Pacific region, strategically positioning the **Northeast as the physical and cultural gateway** to ASEAN.
- **Angami Stone-Pulling Ceremony:** A revered **monolith-erecting ritual** of the Angami tribe, historically performed to **commemorate jubilant occasions, peace treaties, or honor ancestors**. The act of pulling the massive stone slab by hundreds of men symbolizes the tribe's **unity, collective strength, and resilience**.
- **Ashta Lakshmi:** A term used by the Prime Minister to refer to the eight states of the North East, symbolizing the region's **immense potential** and strategic importance for India's future growth trajectory.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 371A (Special Provision for Nagaland):** This Article grants special provisions, stating that no Act of Parliament concerning **Naga religious/social practices, Naga customary law and procedure, or ownership and transfer of land and its resources** shall apply to Nagaland unless the



Legislative Assembly decides. This provision constitutionally protects the indigenous cultural and legal system showcased at the festival.

- **Ministry of DoNER:** Established to act as the nodal agency for the socio-economic development of the North Eastern Region (NER), focusing on planning, execution, and monitoring development schemes to address the infrastructure deficit and promote growth.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The event symbolizes the strategic confluence of **cultural preservation, community-led development, and international outreach** within the framework of the **Act East Policy**. The substantial development package confirms the government's commitment to transforming the Northeast from a border region into a high-growth, '**first frontier**' for India's engagement with the world. This approach is key to achieving socio-economic parity and strengthening national unity by integrating the region's rich tribal diversity into the national mainstream while safeguarding its unique identity.

- **UPSC Relevance:** Essential for **GS-I (Indian Culture/Tribal Society)** for the Hornbill Festival and tribal traditions; **GS-II (Polity & IR)** for the significance of **Article 371A**, the role of DoNER, and the success of the **Act East Policy**; and **GS-III (Economy/Security)** for infrastructure development, border area management, and regional growth strategy.

## 2. Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) Fund: Catalyzing Private R&D

### Key Features of the RDI Fund

- **₹1 Lakh Crore Corpus:** The **Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) Fund**, with a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore, has been launched to **catalyze private sector participation** in India's research and innovation ecosystem.
- **Targeted Financing:** The fund aims to support **high-impact** and **near-commercial projects** (higher **Technology Readiness Levels - TRLs**) through **long-term, low-interest loans or equity support**, focusing on translating research into market outcomes and jobs.
- **Focus Areas:** The scheme prioritizes investment in **strategic** and **sunrise sectors** critical for self-reliance, including **Clean Energy, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Biotechnology, Deep-Tech Manufacturing, Semiconductors, and the Digital Economy**.
- **Layered Structure:** The RDI Fund operates through a **two-tiered, professional structure** to avoid direct government grants. The **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF)** acts as the first-level custodian, with deployment managed by selected **second-level fund managers** (e.g., AIFs, DFIs, TDB, BIRAC).
- **Bridging the Gap:** The fund is designed to **bridge the gap between laboratory research and commercial deployment**, moving Indian companies from merely manufacturing imported technologies to **inventing and exporting** them globally.
- **Complementary Role:** The RDI Fund **complements the core function of the ANRF**, which primarily supports basic and frontier research, nurtures young scientists, and promotes academia–industry collaboration through grants.

### Important Keypoints & Definitions

- **Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) Fund:** A flagship scheme with a corpus of ₹1 lakh crore (over six years, beginning FY 2025–26) under the Department of Science and



Technology (DST) to provide **concessional long-term financing** to the private sector for R&D in strategic areas.

- **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF):** Established via the ANRF Act, 2023, as an **apex body** to provide strategic direction for scientific research across the country. It aims to mobilize  $\text{₹}50,000$  crore over five years (2023–28) from government and non-governmental sources, focusing on **basic research** and **academia–industry linkages**.
- **Technology Readiness Level (TRL):** A type of measurement system used to assess the maturity of a particular technology. The RDI Fund targets projects at **higher TRLs** (closer to commercialization), contrasting with ANRF's support for lower TRL (basic and frontier) research.
- **Viksit Bharat@2047:** The national vision to make India a developed nation by **2047** (the 100th year of independence), driven by technological sovereignty, economic prosperity, and scientific excellence.



### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **ANRF Act, 2023:** The RDI Fund's operational framework is intrinsically linked to the ANRF, which is a **statutory body** established through an Act of Parliament, ensuring a legal and institutional backbone for the country's science and technology governance.
- **Article 51-A (j) of the Constitution (Fundamental Duties):** This mandates every citizen of India to "strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement." The push for innovation and global technological leadership aligns with this duty.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP):** The promotion of scientific temper and creating an ecosystem for innovation can be broadly linked to the state's duty to secure a social order for the promotion of the welfare of the people (Article 38) and the right to work and education (Article 41).

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The introduction of the RDI Fund marks a **paradigm shift** in India's R&D funding strategy, moving away from government-led grants toward a **private-sector-driven, market-linked financing model**. By providing risk capital and long-term, patient funding for high-TRL projects, the government aims to significantly **increase the Gross Expenditure on R&D (GERD)** from the current sub-1% of GDP, bringing India closer to global innovation leaders. This initiative is a **critical pillar** for achieving **technological self-reliance** (Atmanirbharta) and realizing the ambitious goals of **Viksit Bharat@2047**.

- **UPSC Relevance:** Highly relevant for **GS-III (Science & Technology)**, specifically **indigenization of technology** and developing **new technologies**. It is also vital for **GS-II (Governance/Policy)** and **GS-III (Economy)**, covering government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and the role of the private sector in R&D and economic growth.



### 3. U.S. National Security Strategy Shift: Moscow's Favorable View

#### Key Shifts in U.S. Security Strategy

- **Alignment with Moscow's Vision:** Russia's Kremlin welcomed the changes in the U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS), stating the adjustments were **"largely consistent" with Moscow's vision** and marked a radical departure from previous U.S. policy.
- **Softening Stance on Russia:** The shift is characterized by a **re-establishment of "strategic stability" with Russia** and a focus on preventing other powers from dominating without **"wasting blood and treasure to curtail the influence of all the world's great and middle powers,"** indicating a reduced emphasis on confrontation.
- **Critique of European Allies:** The new NSS **sharply criticized key European allies**, calling them **"over-regulated,"** lacking in self-confidence, and facing **"civilisational erasure"** due to issues like immigration. This divisive language targets the unity of traditional alliances like NATO.
- **Focus on National Interest/America First:** The revised strategy formalizes a **pragmatic, transactional, and "America First" foreign policy**, prioritizing narrowly defined U.S. interests over previous commitments to liberal international institutions and global democratization.
- **Ukraine Context:** The new strategy was released amidst stalled talks in Florida between Kyiv officials and U.S. envoys on a U.S.-drafted plan to end the nearly four-year **Ukraine war**, suggesting a push for a quick resolution that may favor Russian demands.
- **European Disarray:** Following the NSS release, the Ukrainian President was scheduled to meet with European leaders (**French President, British Prime Minister, and German Chancellor**) in London to take stock of the negotiations, underscoring **European reliance on U.S. policy** and concern over the shift.



US has stopped calling Russia a direct threat and has spoken of cooperation on issues of strategic stability. This is a good step. We will read and analyse this document carefully. Only after reading it fully will we give our final opinion.

**Dmitry Peskov**  
Russian spokesperson

#### Important Keypoints & Definitions

- **National Security Strategy (NSS):** A comprehensive document mandated by U.S. law (Goldwater-Nichols Act, 1986) that the President submits to Congress, outlining the **major national security interests, threats, challenges, and opportunities** and how the administration intends to use all facets of national power (diplomatic, economic, military) to achieve its security goals.
- **Strategic Stability:** A term in international relations, typically referring to a relationship between major powers (historically the U.S. and Russia/Soviet Union) that is **stable enough to avoid accidental war or escalation**, particularly involving nuclear weapons. The NSS aims to re-establish this with Russia.
- **Alliance Burden-Sharing vs. Burden-Shifting:** The NSS signals a move towards **burden-shifting**, where the U.S. expects European allies to take significantly **greater responsibility for their own defense and security costs** rather than merely sharing the existing burden with the U.S.
- **Civilisational Erasure:** A highly controversial and ideological term used in the NSS to describe the perceived threat to European identity due to immigration and perceived loss of national confidence, reflecting the views of the U.S. administration.



## Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986:** This U.S. Federal Law **mandates the annual preparation and submission of the NSS** by the Executive Branch (President) to the Legislative Branch (Congress), making it a crucial legal document guiding U.S. foreign and defense policy.
- **Presidential Authority in Foreign Policy:** The document is an exercise of the **President's constitutional authority** as Commander-in-Chief and chief diplomat, demonstrating the executive branch's prerogative to set the nation's strategic direction, though Congress holds the power to fund and declare war.

## Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

This radical revision of the U.S. NSS under the current administration signals a profound shift from a post-Cold War commitment to collective security and democratic promotion to a **transactional, realist foreign policy focused solely on American national interest (America First)**. Russia's favorable view confirms that the new U.S. strategy inadvertently **benefits Moscow** by weakening NATO unity, challenging the European political status quo, and potentially reducing pressure on the Ukraine war. This geopolitical development has far-reaching consequences for the global order, the future of the transatlantic alliance, and the structure of major power competition.

- **UPSC Relevance:** Critical for **GS-II (International Relations)**, covering **Foreign Policy of major powers (USA, Russia)**, the **changing world order (multipolarity/realignment)**, the **role and relevance of alliances (NATO)**, and the ongoing **Russia-Ukraine conflict**. It highlights the shift from ideological conflict to **pragmatic power politics** in international affairs.

## 4. India-Russia Deeper Nuclear Ties & India's Energy Security

### Key Agreements and Strategic Rationale

- **Accelerated Cooperation:** India and Russia agreed to accelerate **technical and commercial talks** on Russian-designed **Pressurized Water Reactors (VVERs)**, focusing on research, joint development, **localization, and joint manufacturing** of nuclear equipment in India.
- **Kudankulam & Second Site:** Russia committed to bringing the **Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP)** in Tamil Nadu to **full capacity** (6,000 MWe across six VVER reactors) and assured **long-term fuel cycle and life-cycle support**. The two nations also emphasized finalizing the **second site** for a jointly developed nuclear power plant.
- **Baseload Power Imperative:** Nuclear power is crucial for India as a **non-fossil source** that can provide **Baseload Electricity** (minimum continuous power) essential for grid stability. This is vital as India aims to reduce reliance on coal and integrate intermittent renewable sources like solar and wind.
- **Ambitious Capacity Target:** This partnership is key to India's goal of expanding its nuclear capacity to **22 GW by 2032** and an ambitious **100 GW by 2047**, aligning with the **Viksit Bharat@2047** vision and **Net-Zero by 2070** commitment.





- **Longstanding Partnership:** The nuclear cooperation is a significant component of the **India-Russia Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership**, dating back to a 1961 agreement, providing a reliable and time-tested source of advanced foreign technology.

### Important Keypoints & Definitions

- **Baseload Electricity:** The minimum amount of continuous, stable, and reliable power required by an electricity grid over a 24-hour period. Nuclear power is one of the few low-carbon sources capable of providing this 24/7 power, unlike solar or wind.
- **VVER Reactor (Voda Voda Energo Reactor):** A type of **Pressurized Water Reactor (PWR)** designed and supplied by Russia's Rosatom. These are large-capacity, Generation III reactors used at KKNPP.
- **Localization/Joint Manufacturing:** The process of producing nuclear equipment and components within India through technology transfer and joint ventures. This is vital for **Atmanirbhar Bharat** (Self-Reliant India) and reducing dependence on imports.
- **Nuclear Liability:** The issue of compensation to victims in the event of a nuclear incident. India's **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 (CLNDA)**, makes the operator liable but also grants the operator a **right of recourse** against the supplier under specific circumstances, which has been a point of contention for foreign suppliers like Russia.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Atomic Energy Act, 1962 (Proposed Amendment):** The government plans to introduce the **Atomic Energy Bill, 2025**, to amend this Act. The current law restricts nuclear plant operation to the **Central Government** and its corporations (like NPCIL). The proposed amendments aim to **open the sector to private and state participation** to attract capital and help meet the 100 GW target.
- **Department of Atomic Energy (DAE):** The primary authority under the **Prime Minister's Office (PMO)** responsible for the development of nuclear power technology, research, and non-power applications.
- **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB):** The independent regulatory body responsible for ensuring the safe use of nuclear and radiation energy in India.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The deepening nuclear collaboration with Russia is a **strategic necessity** for India to meet its ambitious clean energy targets, ensure **long-term energy security**, and maintain **grid stability** in the face of rapidly increasing intermittent renewable capacity. The partnership moves beyond simply building reactors (KKNPP) to encompass technology transfer, localization, and fuel cycle support, fostering **technological sovereignty**. The parallel government move to amend the **Atomic Energy Act, 1962**, and **CLNDA, 2010**, is essential to unlock private and foreign investment needed to achieve the **100 GW by 2047** goal.

- **UPSC Relevance:** Highly relevant for **GS-II (International Relations)** regarding the **India-Russia Strategic Partnership** and energy diplomacy; **GS-III (Economy & S&T)** on **Energy Security, Clean Energy Transition, Baseload Power, Indigenous Nuclear Program (Three-Stage)**, and the role of the private sector; and **GS-II (Polity)** for understanding the **legal framework (Atomic Energy Act, 1962)** governing the nuclear sector.



## 5. UIDAI's New Rule to Curb Aadhaar Photocopy Misuse & Boost Privacy

### Key Provisions of the Upcoming Rule

- **Ban on Photocopies & Storage:** The new rule, soon to be notified by the UIDAI (Unique Identification Authority of India), aims to explicitly **discourage entities** (like hotels, event organizers) from taking and **storing physical photocopies** of Aadhaar cards, a practice currently deemed in **contravention of the Aadhaar Act**.
- **Mandatory Registration:** It will **mandate registration** of all **Offline Verification Seeking Entities (OVSEs)**, such as hotels, retailers, and event organizers, seeking to perform Aadhaar-based identity verification.
- **Shift to Digital Verification:** Registered entities will gain access to a new technology ecosystem to facilitate secure, **paperless verification**. This includes methods like **QR code scanning** and using a **new Aadhaar mobile application** currently in development.
- **Enhanced Privacy & Security:** The core objective is to **enhance privacy protection** by eliminating the need to share physical paper copies, which are prone to misuse, unauthorized storage, and data leaks, ensuring Aadhaar data is not compromised.
- **Improved Efficiency (Offline Mode):** The new process is designed to improve service delivery by enabling **app-to-app authentication** and verification that **does not require constant connection to the central Aadhaar database** for every transaction, thus resolving issues caused by intermediate server downtime.



### Important Keypoints & Definitions

- **Offline Verification Seeking Entity (OVSE):** Any entity (government or private) that seeks to verify the identity of an individual using their Aadhaar details through a method that does not require real-time biometric or OTP-based authentication with the central database.
- **Aadhaar Paperless Offline e-KYC:** A secure mechanism where the Aadhaar holder can download a digitally signed file (XML/PDF) or a secure **QR Code** containing limited demographic details (name, photo, DoB, and a hash of the mobile/email) from the UIDAI website/app. This file is **password-protected** and can be shared for offline verification without revealing the full Aadhaar number or core biometrics.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP Act):** The new Aadhaar verification framework is expected to align closely with the principles of the DPDP Act (set to be fully operational within 18 months), particularly those related to **consent, purpose limitation, and data minimization**.
- **Contravention of the Aadhaar Act:** The practice of collecting and storing photocopies is cited as being against the principles of the **Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016**, which emphasizes the need to protect the identity and authentication records of individuals.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Aadhaar Act, 2016 (as amended):** This is the principal law governing the use of Aadhaar. The new rules stem from the UIDAI's authority under this Act to make regulations for the use and verification



of Aadhaar. **Section 29(2) and 29(4)** of the Act impose restrictions on the storage and use of Aadhaar number and core biometric information.

- **Justice K. S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs Union of India (2017):** The Supreme Court ruling affirmed that the **Right to Privacy** is a **Fundamental Right** under **Article 21** of the Constitution. The UIDAI's move to discourage photocopies directly addresses privacy concerns and the risk of identity misuse associated with the physical storage of personal data, aligning Aadhaar usage with the constitutional mandate for privacy protection.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP Act), 2023:** Although not yet fully functional, the new rules are forward-looking and designed to be compliant with this landmark law, which establishes the legal framework for processing digital personal data in India.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The UIDAI's forthcoming rule represents a significant step towards reinforcing the privacy architecture of India's digital public infrastructure. By mandating registration for verification entities and shifting the identity proof method from insecure **paper photocopies** to secure **digital/QR code-based offline verification**, the government is proactively mitigating the risks of identity theft and data leakage. This move is essential for building citizen trust in digital identity systems and ensuring compliance with the fundamental right to privacy and the forthcoming data protection law, thereby strengthening India's overall digital governance framework.

- **UPSC Relevance:** Crucial for **GS-II (Polity & Governance)** for understanding **e-Governance, data protection, and the right to privacy (Article 21)**. It is also important for **GS-III (Science & Technology)** covering **digital identity, cyber security, and the role of UIDAI and the Aadhaar ecosystem** in the broader context of digital transformation in India.

## 6. India's Accelerated Push for Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)

### Key Developments in FTA Negotiations

- **Near-Term Conclusions:** India is aggressively pursuing the conclusion of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and is expected to finalize at least two deals by the end of the year: one with **Oman** and another with **New Zealand**.
- **Targeted Finalization:** The FTA with **Oman** is reportedly close to conclusion, with an announcement anticipated by mid-December, marking a quick turnaround in securing a preferential trade deal in the Gulf region.
- **New Zealand FTA:** Officials are actively engaged in wrapping up the remaining issues with **New Zealand**, aiming to conclude the deal this month and strengthen economic ties in the Asia-Pacific region.
- **Intense Engagement with Major Partners:** High-level bilateral engagements are underway with major economies, including the **European Union (EU)** and the **United States (US)**, indicating a broad-based trade diplomacy push.
- **India-EU FTA Pace:** Negotiations for the **India-EU FTA** are ongoing with face-to-face meetings scheduled, though a final conclusion might stretch into early 2026, potentially coinciding with the India-EU Leadership Summit.





- **Canada CEPA:** India and **Canada** are also engaged in finalizing the Terms of Reference (ToR) for a **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)**, which aims to **double bilateral trade to \$70 billion by 2030**.

### Important Keypoints & Definitions

- **Free Trade Agreement (FTA):** A pact between two or more countries to reduce or eliminate barriers to trade, such as tariffs, quotas, and preferences, for goods and services. India's goal is to sign "**fair, equitable, and mutually beneficial**" agreements.
- **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):** An agreement that is broader and deeper than an FTA, typically covering trade in goods, services, investment, competition, intellectual property rights, and economic cooperation. The ongoing talks with Canada are for a CEPA.
- **Localization and Global Value Chains (GVCs):** FTAs are crucial for integrating India into GVCs by providing predictable market access and reducing input costs, which supports the 'Make in India' initiative and export competitiveness.
- **Rules of Origin (RoO):** A key, often contentious, element of any FTA that specifies the criteria used to determine the national source of a product. RoO are necessary to prevent third-party countries from channeling goods through the FTA partner to avoid tariffs.
- **Trade Deficit:** The difference between the value of a country's imports and exports. India seeks **balanced** FTAs that address its trade deficits with partners by securing market access for its services and goods.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 253 (Legislation for giving effect to international agreements):** This Article of the Constitution empowers Parliament to make any law for the whole or any part of the territory of India for **implementing any treaty, agreement or convention** with any other country or countries or any decision made at any international conference, association or other body. FTAs are implemented domestically through legislation under this power.
- **Union List (Entry 14):** The Seventh Schedule, under the Union List, assigns the subject of "Entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries and implementing of treaties, agreements and conventions with foreign countries" to the Central Government (Union List, Entry 14). The **Ministry of Commerce and Industry** is the nodal ministry for FTA negotiations.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

India's decisive push for concluding multiple FTAs simultaneously with diverse partners (Gulf, Asia-Pacific, North America, and EU) signals a major shift in its trade policy from a historically cautious approach to an **aggressive strategy of integration** into the global economy. These agreements are vital for securing sustained export growth, attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and achieving the national target of becoming a **developed economy (Viksit Bharat)**. The focus on **mutually beneficial** and **balanced** deals suggests a strategic attempt to use trade policy as a tool for economic diplomacy and diversification of market access.

- **UPSC Relevance:** Highly relevant for **GS-II (International Relations/Trade Diplomacy)** and **GS-III (Economy)**. Key areas include the implications of FTAs on domestic industries, export competitiveness, addressing the trade deficit, the role of FTAs in global supply chains, and the challenges in negotiations with major blocs like the EU and US.



## 7. Limits of Tech-Fixes for Accountability in Welfare Schemes

### Critique of Digital Surveillance in Governance

- **Focus Shift over Outcome:** Digital tools like **biometric attendance** (e.g., for government employees) and the **National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) app** (in MGNREGA) shift the focus of employees from completing the work to merely **marking attendance/logging activity** in a timely manner, failing to guarantee actual quality work.
- **New Forms of Malpractice:** Tech-fixes often lead to **displacement of corruption** rather than its elimination. For example, in **MGNREGA**, fudged signatures were replaced by **fudged photographs** (uploading random JPEGs) to siphon off wages, acknowledged even by the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD).
- **Exclusion and Inefficiency:** Mandatory biometric authentication (e.g., **Aadhaar-Based Biometric Authentication - ABBA** for PDS rations) led to the **exclusion** of vulnerable groups like the elderly, sick, and immobile who could not show up in person, causing "pain without gain."
- **Worker Demotivation and Privacy Invasion:** Surveillance apps (e.g., **Facial Recognition Technology - FRT** in Poshan Tracker for Take Home Rations, or **geo-tagging** of Auxiliary Nurses and Midwives - ANMs) demotivate sincere workers by prioritizing photographic evidence over actual counselling and intrude on privacy (e.g., photo of a breastfeeding mother).
- **Agnotology (Cultivated Ignorance):** The government demonstrates a **stubborn refusal to learn** from the documented failures (exclusion, inefficiency, new corruption) of tech-fixes, potentially due to the influence of **vested interests** creating an assured market for surveillance infrastructure and devices.
- **Accountability vs. Responsibility:** The article advocates moving beyond mere **accountability** (doing what someone else wants) toward fostering **responsibility** (self-motivation to act in public interest), which cannot be achieved through coercive digital surveillance.

### Important Keypoints & Definitions

- **Agnotology:** A term coined by science historian Robert Proctor, meaning the study of **how and why various forms of knowledge have "not come to be,"** or the deliberate, culturally induced production of ignorance. The article uses this to describe the government's refusal to acknowledge the harms of surveillance apps.
- **National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS) App:** An application introduced in 2022 to record the attendance of workers under the **MGNREGA** scheme by requiring two time-stamped, geo-tagged photographs of the workers at the worksite daily.
- **Aadhaar-Based Biometric Authentication (ABBA):** The use of an individual's fingerprints or iris scans linked to their Aadhaar number to verify identity, often mandatory for accessing benefits like PDS rations.
- **Poshan Tracker:** A Government of India application used by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) to track nutritional outcomes and monitor the delivery of services like Take Home Rations (THR) at Anganwadi Centres, now mandating **FRT**.
- **Accountability vs. Responsibility:** **Accountability** refers to external monitoring and enforcing rules. **Responsibility** refers to internal motivation and a sense of duty toward public interest (the preferred goal for a better work culture).



## Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty):** The Supreme Court's ruling in *Justice K. S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs Union of India (2017)* established the **Right to Privacy** as a Fundamental Right under Article 21. The use of surveillance apps and mandatory photograph uploads raises significant concerns regarding **privacy invasions** and the principle of **proportionality**.
- **MGNREGA Act, 2005:** The NMMS app is an administrative tool used to implement this Act, which guarantees the right to a minimum of 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The Act's core aim is to provide rural livelihood security, which is undermined by attendance fraud.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023 (Upcoming):** Although the full implementation is pending, the privacy invasion concerns (e.g., photographs of breastfeeding mothers) highlighted by the article would fall under the strict provisions of this Act concerning **consent and purpose limitation** for data processing.

## Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The widespread adoption of surveillance-focused **tech-fixes** in welfare administration, while aimed at improving accountability, is demonstrating limited effect, leading to **exclusion, inefficiency, and new forms of malpractice**. The article provides a critical, evidence-based argument that technological solutions alone are "**snake oil**" for deep-seated governance problems and cannot replace the need to foster a culture of **responsibility and public service ethics**. The government's continued rollout of such apps, despite documented failures, raises ethical and political questions about the **capture of policy-making** by commercial interests.

- **UPSC Relevance:** Highly relevant for **GS-II (Governance and Social Justice)**, covering the **role of technology in governance (e-Governance)**, **accountability and transparency**, challenges in **welfare scheme implementation (PDS, MGNREGA, Poshan Abhiyan)**, and the intersection of **Fundamental Rights (Right to Privacy)** with public service delivery. The concept of **Agnology** is important for analytical essays.

## 8. Aviation Safety Crisis: Dilution of Pilot Duty Limits (FDTL)

### Key Issues and Regulatory Failures

- **Abeyance of FDTL Rules:** Following flight cancellations by a private airline (Indigo), the **Ministry of Civil Aviation** ordered the **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)** to place the **Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL) Civil Aviation Requirements (CARs)** under immediate **abeyance**. This action prioritizes the commercial interests of airlines over crew fatigue and passenger safety.
- **Compromise of Safety Norms:** The DGCA's initial appeal to pilots for "cooperation" followed by the Ministry's subsequent order to dilute a safety measure mandated by a High Court order makes a "**mockery of flight safety**" and demonstrates a long-standing pattern of yielding to commercial aviation requirements.
- **Underemployment of Crew:** Airlines, particularly the one mentioned, are accused of deliberately **underemploying qualified flight crew**, taking advantage of a DGCA CAR (Series 'C' Part II Section 3, April 2022) which only requires a minimum of **three sets of crew per aircraft** for domestic operations, when far more are practically needed to adhere to safety FDTL norms.



- **Lack of Independent Oversight:** The crisis highlights the **lack of safety oversight** by the DGCA, reinforcing a 2006 **ICAO audit report** that identified the need for India to establish an **independent civil aviation authority** free from the control of the government and the Ministry.
- **Judiciary's Role:** The judiciary has shown inconsistency, initially slamming the aviation authority for risking lives by diluting FDTL rules (Writ petition 1687 of 2008 in Bombay High Court) but later reversing the order and upholding the Ministry's action, signaling a lack of consistent priority for aviation safety.
- **Consequences of Delay:** Despite airlines and the DGCA knowing the new FDTL regulations would take effect from November 1, 2025, their lack of preparation led to widespread operational chaos, impacting thousands of passengers and demonstrating a failure to implement safety requirements proactively.

### Important Keypoints & Definitions

- **Flight Duty Time Limitations (FDTL):** Regulatory limits specified by the DGCA (as **Civil Aviation Requirements - CARs**) on the maximum number of hours a flight crew member (pilot or cabin crew) can be on duty or flying, and the minimum rest periods they must be provided. FDTL rules are crucial for mitigating **crew fatigue**, which is a major factor in aviation accidents.
- **Civil Aviation Requirement (CAR):** Regulations and standards issued by the **DGCA** under the powers derived from the Aircraft Act and Rules. These are the mandatory rules that airlines and crew must follow to ensure safety and standardization.
- **International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO):** A specialized agency of the United Nations that codifies the principles and techniques of international air navigation and fosters the planning and development of international air transport to ensure safe and orderly growth. Its audit reports hold significant weight on national aviation safety standards.
- **Basal Fatigue:** A state of reduced mental and physical performance caused by lack of sleep, which significantly impairs a pilot's ability to safely operate an aircraft.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Aircraft Act, 1934 and Aircraft Rules, 1937:** These are the primary Central Acts that give the government and the **DGCA** the legal authority to regulate all civil aviation activities, including setting safety standards like FDTL.
- **Article 21 (Right to Life):** In the context of the Bombay High Court ruling, the safety of passengers and crew is implicitly linked to the **Fundamental Right to Life** under **Article 21** of the Constitution, as arbitrary dilution of safety norms endangers life.
- **Writ Petition (Writ petition 1687 of 2008):** A constitutional remedy filed in a High Court (under Article 226) or the Supreme Court (under Article 32) to seek judicial review or enforcement of fundamental rights. The pilot association used this to challenge the Ministry's dilution of FDTL rules.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The recurring failure to prioritize crew safety and adherence to international safety standards, evidenced by the arbitrary dilution of FDTL rules, exposes a fundamental weakness in India's aviation governance: the **lack of an independent regulatory body** (DGCA) free from political and commercial pressure. This creates a systemic risk, directly threatening the lives of passengers and crew and severely damaging India's reputation for aviation safety oversight on the global stage. This crisis underscores the need for genuine



legislative and structural reforms, as recommended by ICAO, to ensure the DGCA can operate with the autonomy necessary to enforce safety norms without compromise.

- **UPSC Relevance:** Highly relevant for **GS-II (Governance and Policy)** and **GS-III (Security and Infrastructure)**. Key areas include the **effectiveness and autonomy of regulatory bodies (DGCA)**, **judicial activism vs. judicial restraint**, the importance of **aviation safety and its economic implications**, and the challenge of balancing **commercial interests** with **public safety**.

## 9. Sanchar Saathi App Mandate: Privacy vs. Cybercrime Control

### Core Conflict and Government Policy

- **Preloading Mandate & Backlash:** The government issued an ill-advised directive mandating smartphone manufacturers to **preload the 'Sanchar Saathi' app** on every new device with **privileged access** (phone, SMS, location) that could not be disabled. This was swiftly **withdrawn** following overwhelming backlash from civil society and activists.
- **Justification vs. Surveillance Risk:** The government justified the app as a practical measure against **cyberfraud and identity theft** (e.g., scams exploiting spoofed devices). However, critics argued that a single privileged app on millions of devices **structurally alters the state's capacity for mass surveillance** and increases the attack surface for criminal actors.
- **Failure of Proportionality Test:** The mandate is argued to fail the **test of proportionality** laid down by the Supreme Court in the *Puttaswamy* judgment, as equally effective but **less intrusive ways** to address cyber scams already exist (e.g., existing portals, USSD codes, SMS checks, and the CEIR portal).
- **Focus on Digital Literacy:** The core recommendation is for the state to **shift its focus from technical "blanket mandates"** to a sustained mission of **improving digital literacy** among citizens. This involves continuous, tailored public education (like the **RBI Kehta Hai** campaign) to change user behavior and build distrust of unsolicited links/callers.
- **The Three-Pillar Strategy:** A comprehensive, long-term solution must rest on three pillars: **(1) imposing obligations on telecom and financial firms** to detect and disrupt fraud patterns; **(2) ensuring functional user reporting and redress mechanisms** (e.g., 1930 helpline); and **(3) a sustained public education program** on digital risks.



### Important Keypoints & Definitions

- **Sanchar Saathi Portal:** A legitimate telecom consumer protection and fraud management portal launched by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). Its existing components (like **CEIR** and **TAF COP**) allow users to trace lost/stolen phones, check mobile connections, and report spam/fraud using less intrusive methods.
- **CEIR (Central Equipment Identity Register):** A module of the Sanchar Saathi portal that helps track lost or stolen mobile devices and prevents them from being used on any Indian network, based on their unique **IMEI** (International Mobile Equipment Identity) number.
- **Agnotology (Contextual):** Although not explicitly used, the phenomenon described—the stubborn pursuit of a flawed tech solution while ignoring evidence of its failures and the effectiveness of alternative behavioral/systemic measures—can be linked to the concept of **"cultivated ignorance."**



- **Digital Arrest Fraud:** A sophisticated scam where fraudsters impersonate law enforcement or government officials to threaten victims with "arrest" over the phone, coercing them into immediate financial transfers or sharing sensitive data.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) vs Union of India (2017):** The landmark Supreme Court ruling that established the **Right to Privacy** as a **Fundamental Right** under **Article 21** of the Constitution. Any state action infringing upon privacy must satisfy a three-fold test: **legality, necessity, and proportionality**. The Sanchar Saathi mandate failed the latter two tests due to the availability of less intrusive alternatives.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023 (Upcoming):** The mandatory preloading of an app with broad access violates the principles of **consent and data minimization**, which are central to the DPDP Act. The Act strictly governs how personal data (including location and communication logs) can be processed by government and private entities.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The withdrawal of the Sanchar Saathi preloading mandate serves as a crucial case study highlighting the tension between the state's legitimate need to combat rising cybercrime and the imperative to protect the **Fundamental Right to Privacy**. The episode confirms that simplistic, blanket **technological solutions (tech-fixes)** that compromise user rights are unsustainable and often less effective than targeted, **systemic interventions** and **continuous digital literacy campaigns**. Future governance must focus on strengthening regulatory obligations on financial/telecom intermediaries and empowering citizens through education to truly curb cyberfraud, ensuring compliance with the **Puttaswamy principles**.

- **UPSC Relevance:** Highly relevant for **GS-II (Polity & Governance)**, specifically **e-Governance, the Right to Privacy (Article 21), and the Proportionality Test**. It is crucial for **GS-III (Science & Technology/Security)** concerning **cybersecurity, cybercrime, digital public infrastructure, and the ethical dilemmas of state surveillance**.

## 10. Export Promotion Mission (EPM): India's Unified Strategy for Global Trade

### Key Pillars of the Export Promotion Mission (EPM)

- **Unified, Digital Framework:** The government approved the **Export Promotion Mission (EPM)** with a total outlay of **₹25,060 crore** (FY 2025-26 to 2030-31), consolidating multiple fragmented export-support schemes into a single, **digitally driven, outcome-based architecture** managed by the **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)**.
- **Dual Sub-Schemes (Finance & Market Access):** The EPM operates through two integrated sub-schemes: **Niryat Protsahan** (Financial Enablers), focusing on **affordable trade finance for MSMEs** (e.g., interest subvention, factoring, credit cards for e-commerce), and **Niryat Disha** (Non-Financial Enablers), focusing on **market readiness** (e.g., quality compliance, international branding, logistics support).
- **Massive Credit Guarantee Expansion:** The Mission is reinforced by the expansion of the **Credit Guarantee Scheme for Exporters (CGSE)**, providing an additional **₹20,000 crore** in credit support with a **100% Government of India guarantee** (via NCGTC) to ease liquidity, especially for MSMEs seeking collateral-free credit.



- **RBI Regulatory Relief:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced significant relief measures (The Reserve Bank of India (Trade Relief Measures) Directions, 2025) including **moratoriums on loan repayments, extension of export credit tenure to 450 days, and FEMA relaxations** (extending export realization period from 9 to 15 months) to mitigate debt-servicing stress and protect exporters' credit histories.
- **Focus on Inclusive Growth:** EPM explicitly targets **MSMEs, first-time exporters, and labour-intensive sectors** (like textiles, leather, gems & jewellery). The **Niryat Disha** component directs interventions, such as inland transport reimbursement, towards **non-traditional and low-export-intensity districts** to ensure a broader, inclusive geographic spread of India's exports.



### Important Keypoints & Definitions

- **DGFT (Directorate General of Foreign Trade):** The implementing agency for the EPM, operating under the Department of Commerce, responsible for administering the Foreign Trade Policy and related laws.
- **Global Value Chains (GVCs):** The full range of activities needed to bring a product or service from conception to end-use, often crossing international borders. EPM aims to integrate Indian firms, particularly MSMEs, more deeply into these chains.
- **Niryat (Export):** The Hindi term used in the sub-scheme names, signifying a dedicated focus on export promotion.
- **FEMA Relaxations (Foreign Exchange Management Act):** The RBI announced amendments to the regulations, extending the time limit for exporters to receive and repatriate export proceeds from nine months to 15 months, providing greater flexibility amid global trade uncertainty.
- **IRACP Norms (Income Recognition, Asset Classification, and Provisioning):** Standard guidelines set by the RBI for banks on classifying loans and making provisions. The RBI relief measures exclude the moratorium period from Days Past Due (DPD) calculations, providing **regulatory forbearance** to avoid penalizing exporters' accounts.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Union List (Entry 41):** The Constitution places the power to legislate on "**Trade and Commerce with foreign countries; import and export across customs frontiers; [and] customs duties**" under the exclusive domain of the Central Government (Union List, Entry 41), providing the basis for the *Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992*, under which the DGFT operates.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** This Act governs the movement of foreign exchange in and out of India. The RBI's **FEMA relaxations** (extending realization/repatriation periods) are implemented through regulatory changes under this Act.
- **Article 301 (Freedom of Trade, Commerce, and Intercourse):** While primarily dealing with inter-state trade, the general constitutional principle of promoting free and fair commerce underlies all trade promotion missions, including exports.



## Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The **Export Promotion Mission (EPM)** represents a sophisticated, "**whole-of-government**" approach to trade policy, strategically linking fiscal incentives, regulatory flexibility (RBI/FEMA), and digital governance. By focusing heavily on **MSMEs and district-level participation**, the Mission is designed to democratize access to global markets and achieve **inclusive export-led growth**. This structural reform is critical for enhancing India's **global competitiveness, strengthening the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' mission**, and realizing the vision of **Viksit Bharat @ 2047** by making India a resilient and reliable global trade partner.

- **UPSC Relevance:** Highly relevant for **GS-III (Economy)**, specifically **Indian Economy (Growth & Development)**, **External Sector (Trade Policy)**, and the **role of MSMEs**. It is also important for **GS-II (Governance)**, covering the **role of government schemes (Mission Mode)**, **e-Governance (DGFT Digital Platform)**, and the **functioning of RBI as a regulator**.

## 11. Draft Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) Bill, 2025: Autonomy vs. Reform

### Key Concerns and Proposed Changes

- **Status Change and Autonomy Loss:** The primary protest is against the proposed conversion of the **Indian Statistical Institute (ISI)** from a "**registered society**" (under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act) to a "**statutory body corporate**" by repealing the *Indian Statistical Institute Act, 1959* (which declared it an **Institution of National Importance - INI**). Academicians fear this move will **strip the ISI of its academic and institutional autonomy**.
- **Government Domination of Governance:** The proposed Bill shifts authority from the existing **Council** (with academic representation) to a **Board of Governors (BoG)** heavily **dominated by government nominees**. This change sidelines the authority of faculty and academic stakeholders, leading to apprehensions of **political interference** in key appointments and academic decisions.
- **Funding Model Shift to Corporate/Revenue**  
**Focus:** The draft Bill introduces a push for a **corporate model of funding**, emphasizing the **power to generate revenue** through student fees, consultancy services, and sponsored research (Section 29). Academicians fear this focus will endanger **basic research**, which is a long-term process without immediate commercial visibility.
- **Impact on Appointments:** Under the new structure, appointments would be controlled by the Union Government through the BoG. Critics note that the ISI's own representatives on the governing body will be **significantly reduced or entirely eliminated** compared to the existing Act, fueling concerns about potential political interference in faculty selection.
- **Contravention of Federalism and Law:** Academicians argue that abolishing the ISI as a society registered under the West Bengal Societies Registration Act infringes upon the jurisdiction of the state-level Societies Act and is **against the spirit of cooperative federalism**.



### Important Keypoints & Definitions

- **Indian Statistical Institute (ISI):** Founded in 1931 by **P.C. Mahalanobis** in Kolkata. ISI is an **Institution of National Importance (INI)** and is credited with shaping India's planning and statistical system (including the foundation of the **NSSO - National Sample Survey Organisation**).



- **Statutory Body Corporate:** A body created by a specific Act of Parliament or State Legislature, possessing perpetual succession and a common seal, and accountable directly to the Ministry. This conversion is seen as reducing the self-governance enjoyed by a **Registered Society**.
- **Institution of National Importance (INI):** An institution recognized by an Act of Parliament as being premier in the country's development of high-quality manpower and research in its specified area. ISI was designated an INI in 1959.
- **Cooperative Federalism:** A principle where the Central and State Governments cooperate in the spirit of accommodation, particularly in legislative and administrative spheres. The repeal of the State Societies Act registration is viewed as undermining this spirit.
- **Mashelkar Committee (2020):** The most recent review committee mentioned by the government, which recommended major reforms to strengthen the governance and global competitiveness of ISI, providing the official justification for the new Bill.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Societies Registration Act, 1860 / West Bengal Societies Registration Act, 1961:** These are the legal frameworks under which ISI was registered as a society, granting it its current autonomy, by-laws, and memorandum of association, which the new Bill seeks to override.
- **Indian Statistical Institute Act, 1959:** The Central Act that declared the ISI as an INI and established its governance structure, which the draft *Indian Statistical Institute Bill, 2025* intends to **repeal**.
- **Seventh Schedule (Union List, Entry 66):** Parliament has the exclusive power to legislate on "**co-ordination and determination of standards in institutions for higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions.**" This gives the Union government the legal authority to enact the ISI Bill, 2025, and redesignate ISI.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The controversy surrounding the draft ISI Bill, 2025, encapsulates the perennial policy tension between the government's pursuit of **administrative efficiency and global competitiveness** (as recommended by review committees) and the fundamental requirement for **academic autonomy** and freedom of basic research in premier institutions. While the government aims to restructure ISI for its centenary, the proposed governance changes threaten its legacy of independent scholarship and raise serious concerns regarding **politicization of appointments** and potential erosion of **cooperative federalism**, making the Bill a focal point for political opposition.

- **UPSC Relevance:** Highly relevant for **GS-II (Polity & Governance)**, covering the **role of statutory bodies (INI), issues related to academic governance and autonomy, cooperative federalism**, and the **politicization of institutions**. It is also important for **GS-III (Economy/S&T)**, covering the **role of statistics and institutions (ISI, NSSO)** in national planning, and the **funding of basic research**.

## 12. Nithari Acquittals: Exposing Systemic Failures in Criminal Justice

### Key Failures Revealed by the Acquittals

- **Failed Prosecution, Not Clean Acquittal:** The Supreme Court's acquittal of Surinder Koli in the last case, following the earlier acquittal of Mohinder Singh Pandher, highlights a "**failed prosecution**" due to **tainted or insufficiently collected evidence**, rather than definitive proof of innocence. This constitutes a "**double injustice**"—to the accused and the victims.



- **Secondary Victimisation of the Accused:** Individuals like Koli (19 years) and Pandher (14 years) suffered prolonged **wrongful incarceration as undertrials** due to investigative failures. India **lacks a statutory framework** to compensate those wrongly prosecuted, with the Law Commission's recommendation for compensation remaining unimplemented.
- **Denial of Justice to Victims:** The acquittal, without any direction for a **fresh or independent investigation**, results in the **absolute denial of truth, accountability, and closure** for the victims' families. The system's focus on the accused allows the actual perpetrator to remain unidentified (e.g., the Anokhilal parallel).
- **Absence of Accountability and Oversight:** The underlying failure is the **lack of accountability** for investigative officers, forensic experts, and prosecution officers who make grave errors (losing evidence, relying on unscientific methods, building fragile cases) without facing repercussions.
- **Non-implementation of Law Commission Report:** The failure to implement the **Law Commission of India's 277th Report**, which recommended a **statutory compensation scheme** for wrongful prosecution, perpetuates injustice for those whose lives are erased by a flawed system.

### Important Keypoints & Definitions

- **Undertrial:** A person who is currently being tried in a court of law for a crime but has not yet been convicted or acquitted. Undertrials form a significant portion of India's prison population.
- **Failed Prosecution:** A case where the state (prosecution) is unable to prove guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, often due to poor investigation, tainted evidence, or procedural lapses, leading to acquittal.
- **Secondary Victimisation:** The injustice suffered by an accused person due to the flaws and delays of the criminal justice system (like long incarceration and stigma) even if they are ultimately acquitted.
- **Law Commission of India's 277th Report:** This report specifically dealt with the issue of **Wrongful Prosecution (Miscarriage of Justice)** and recommended a comprehensive legal framework for mandatory compensation to victims of wrongful incarceration.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty):** Wrongful prosecution and prolonged incarceration directly infringe upon the accused's **Right to Personal Liberty** under Article 21. Furthermore, the victims' right to justice and a fair investigation is also implicitly linked to this Article.
- **Section 482 of CrPC (Saving of inherent powers of High Court):** Though often used for quashing FIRs or proceedings, the High Courts have broad inherent powers to ensure the ends of justice are met. The failure to direct a fresh investigation in cases where the accused are acquitted on procedural grounds is a missed opportunity to use these powers to pursue the actual perpetrator.
- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA):** Cited as a stringent special law where the threshold for bail is extremely high, leading to prolonged incarceration of undertrials even before conviction, exacerbating the problem of wrongful prosecution.

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The Nithari acquittals are a searing indictment of the systemic weaknesses within India's criminal justice system, revealing that merely meeting **procedure** (acquitting on insufficient evidence) does not equate to



delivering **justice** (identifying the perpetrator and compensating the wrongly accused). The lack of accountability for investigative and prosecution failures, coupled with the non-implementation of the Law Commission's recommendation for statutory compensation, highlights a critical gap in constitutional governance. Reforming the criminal justice system must prioritize **truth-finding, procedural rigour**, and establishing a robust **framework for accountability** across all agencies.

- **UPSC Relevance:** Highly relevant for **GS-II (Polity & Governance)**, covering **Criminal Justice System Reforms, Judicial Delays/Backlogs, Police and Prosecution Accountability, Law Commission Reports**, and the enforcement of **Fundamental Rights (Article 21)**. It is also important for **GS-I (Society)**, touching upon **Victimology and Social Stigma** associated with wrongful prosecution.

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