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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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1. Retail Inflation in India Rises Marginally to 0.7% in November 2025

Key Highlights

- Retail inflation (CPI) increased slightly to **0.7% in Nov 2025**, up from **0.25% in Oct 2025**, still the second-lowest ever recorded in the current CPI series.
- **Food & beverages inflation contracted by 2.8%**, driven by falling prices of vegetables and pulses—especially **potatoes, onions, and tomatoes**.
- **Fuel inflation rose to 2.3%**, compared to 2% in October and a contraction of 1.8% in November last year.
- Category-wise trends: **Pan/tobacco/intoxicants** increased to 3%, **clothing & footwear** eased to 1.5%, and **housing inflation** remained stable at 2.95%.
- Inflation has declined in **7 of the first 8 months** of FY2025–26 due to the **base effect** and sustained fall in food prices; however, edible oils showed a sharp rise (7.9%) due to higher mustard and coconut oil prices.

Definitions & Core Concepts

- **CPI (Consumer Price Index):** Measures price changes in a basket of goods and services consumed by households; primary indicator of retail inflation.
- **Retail Inflation:** Increase in prices consumers pay for goods and services, measured through CPI.
- **Base Effect:** Influence of the previous year's unusually high/low inflation on the current year's inflation, often amplifying or suppressing trends.
- **Food Inflation:** Movement in food prices; influenced by seasonality, supply-demand imbalances, and agricultural output.

Marginal rise

Retail inflation in India inched up in November 2025, rising from October's record low of 0.25%



Source: CMIE

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Collection of Statistics Act, 2008:** Provides statutory backing for CPI data collection by MoSPI.
- **RBI Act, 1934 (Amendment 2016):** Introduced the **Monetary Policy Framework** with an inflation target of $4\% \pm 2\%$.
- **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):** Statutory body that determines repo rates to maintain price stability.
- **42nd Constitutional Amendment, 1976:** Shifted **Economic & Social Planning** to the Concurrent List, allowing Centre–State coordination in inflation management.

Additional Analytical Points

- Persistently low inflation may reflect **weak consumer demand**, requiring prudent monetary policy actions.
- Falling vegetable and pulse prices may negatively affect **farmers' incomes**, particularly for perishable crops.



- Rising edible oil inflation highlights India's **import dependence** and vulnerability to global commodity markets.
- Stable housing inflation suggests **moderate real-estate cost dynamics**.
- Increasing fuel inflation could trigger **second-round effects** on transport, logistics, and core inflation.

Conclusion

Despite a slight rise, retail inflation in November 2025 remains extremely low due to sustained contraction in food prices and a favourable base effect. Emerging pressures in fuel and edible oils underline the need for continued policy vigilance. Balancing price stability with farmers' welfare and growth recovery remains a key economic priority.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS-III**: inflation, monetary policy, food price trends, and macroeconomic stability.
- Useful for **Prelims**: CPI composition, MPC mandate, base effect, statutory framework of inflation targeting.
- Useful for **Mains**: analysis of inflation dynamics, agriculture–inflation linkage, and policy interventions.
- Relevant for **Essay** topics on economic management, price stability, and inclusive development.

2. Dispute Over 'Deepathoon' Site at Thirupparankundram

Key Highlights

- Tamil Nadu govt. informed the Madras High Court (Madurai Bench) that the **Karthigai Deepam has been lit at the Uchipillaiyar temple mandapam for over 150 years**, not on the stone pillar claimed as a *deepathoon*.
- The State asserted that **no temple records, registers, inscriptions, HR&CE files, or Agama texts** support the petitioners' claim that the pillar is a traditional deepathoon site.
- The Division Bench began hearing appeals against the earlier **Single Judge order directing lighting of the Deepam at the pillar**, in addition to traditional locations.
- Advocate General argued that earlier judgments (1920 demarcation case and 1996 HC ruling) also **did not recognize the pillar as a deepathoon**; in 1996 the court refused lighting Deepam anywhere other than the traditional mandapam.
- The State emphasized that **right to worship must yield to considerations of public order**, and the Single Judge should have upheld status quo in absence of credible evidence.
- The AG contended that the December 1 order lacked evidentiary basis to classify the stone pillar as a deepathoon and could potentially disturb peace.

Definitions & Key Concepts

- **Deepam/Deepathoon**: A ceremonial lamp/structure traditionally used for lighting lamps during temple festivals; claims of historic usage must be backed by inscriptions, Agama rules, or temple records.



- **Agamas:** Ancient Hindu scriptures prescribing temple rituals, architectural norms, worship procedures, and festival traditions.
- **Right to Worship:** A facet of **Article 25**, subject to **public order, morality, health**, and other constitutional limitations.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 25 & 26:** Guarantee freedom of religion and management of religious affairs but allow the State to regulate in the interest of **public order, morality, and health**.
- **Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowments (HR&CE) Department:** Statutory body managing Hindu temples in Tamil Nadu; empowered to administer rituals as per tradition and ensure public safety.
- **Judicial Precedent:**
 - **1920 suit** demarcated temple–dargah boundaries with **no recognition of a deepathoon site**.
 - **1996 Madras HC judgment** disallowed lighting Deepam at any non-traditional site, affirming the mandapam as the legitimate location.
- **Doctrine of Status Quo:** Courts often maintain existing practice to avoid disturbance of public order unless strong evidence justifies change.

Additional Analytical Points

- Religious practices must be “**essential religious practices**” to receive higher protection; absence of historical or scriptural evidence weakens claims.
- The case reflects the recurring judicial challenge of balancing **religious tradition, administrative feasibility, and inter-community harmony**.
- Disputes involving religious sites on shared or sensitive land (temple–dargah vicinity) require heightened caution to prevent social tensions.
- HR&CE’s archival and administrative records play a critical role in determining authenticity of ritual claims.

Conclusion

The Tamil Nadu government has maintained that there is **no historical, documentary, or scriptural basis** to recognize the stone pillar at Thirupparankundram as a deepathoon. By emphasizing longstanding practice and previous judicial rulings, the State argues that modifying the ritual site without evidence could disturb public order. The matter underscores the judiciary’s responsibility in balancing religious freedoms with societal stability.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS-II:** freedom of religion, Article 25–26, essential religious practices doctrine, public order limitations.
- Useful for **GS-II/Polity & Governance:** role and powers of HR&CE departments, temple administration, judicial review of religious practices.
- Relevant for **GS-I (Society):** religious customs, inter-community harmony, dispute resolution.
- Offers content for **Essay** themes on balancing tradition with constitutional governance, and maintaining public order in religious matters.



3. Cabinet Approves CoalSETU Window for Auction of Coal Linkages

Key Highlights

- The Union Cabinet has approved the **CoalSETU (Seamless, Efficient & Transparent Utilisation) Window** under the 2016 NRS Linkage Policy to auction coal linkages for **any industrial use and exports**, marking a major coal sector reform.
- The new window allows **long-term coal linkage allocation on auction basis** without end-use restrictions for domestic buyers; however, **coking coal is excluded and traders cannot participate**.
- The policy shifts from the earlier system where coal linkages in the **Non-Regulated Sector (NRS)** were available only to specified end-users such as cement, steel, sponge iron, aluminium, and CPPs.
- Coal obtained under CoalSETU can be used for **own consumption, coal washing, exports (up to 50% of linkage quantity)**, and flexible use within group companies; **resale within India is prohibited**.
- The reform aims to **accelerate utilisation of domestic coal reserves**, reduce dependence on imports, improve ease of doing business, and align coal allocation policy with **commercial mining reforms**.
- The window is expected to increase availability of **washed coal**, reduce imports, and create export opportunities for washed coal in international markets.



Definitions & Key Concepts

- **Coal Linkage:** A long-term supply assurance from coal companies to consumers, ensuring steady availability of coal at notified prices.
- **NRS (Non-Regulated Sector):** Industries not governed by electricity tariff regulations—e.g., cement, sponge iron, aluminium, steel (non-power), etc.
- **Washed Coal:** Coal processed to remove impurities, improving calorific value and reducing emissions; crucial for energy efficiency and meeting environmental norms.
- **Commercial Mining:** Policy reform allowing private players to mine and sell coal without end-use restrictions, increasing competition and efficiency.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015:** Enables transparent auction of coal blocks and commercial mining by private companies.
- **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957:** Governs mining activities, allocation, and licensing, and forms the legal basis for coal sector reforms.
- **Article 39(b):** Directive Principle mandating distribution of material resources (like coal) to best serve the common good—supports reforms improving efficient resource utilisation.



- **Environmental Regulations:** Washed coal usage aligns with **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981** and climate commitments to reduce emissions intensity.

Additional Analytical Points

- Introducing a separate CoalSETU window improves **market-driven allocation** and reduces bureaucratic bottlenecks in coal distribution.
- Allowing exports (up to 50% of linkage coal) enhances India's participation in the **global coal value chain**, especially for washed coal.
- Restricting traders ensures that linkages are used for **genuine industrial needs**, preventing hoarding or speculative resale.
- Flexibility for group companies promotes **operational efficiency** and optimal use of coal resources.
- The move supports India's objective of **reducing coal imports**, currently significant for non-coking and washed coal segments.

Conclusion

The CoalSETU Window represents a major step toward a transparent, market-oriented coal allocation system. By allowing coal linkages for diverse industrial uses and exports without end-use restrictions, the policy strengthens energy security, supports industrial growth, and enhances utilisation of domestic coal resources. It also aligns coal linkage policy with broader reforms in commercial mining and resource governance.

UPSC Relevance

- Important for **GS-III (Economy & Energy Security)**: coal sector reforms, resource utilisation, industrial policy, import reduction strategy.
- Relevant for **GS-III (Environment)**: role of washed coal in reducing pollution and improving energy efficiency.
- Useful for **Prelims**: CoalSETU, NRS, coal linkage system, commercial mining reforms, key Acts (MMDR Act, Coal Mines Act).
- Can be used in **Mains answers** on infrastructure, mineral resources, market reforms, and sustainable energy transitions.

4. India's Leadership Role in Shaping a Blue Ocean Strategy

Key Highlights

- India historically championed ocean equity, supporting the **“common heritage of mankind”** principle during UNCLOS negotiations; today, it faces new oceanic challenges such as climate change, acidification, sea-level rise, and IUU fishing, especially in the climate-vulnerable Indian Ocean basin.
- A Blue Ocean Strategy for India rests on **three pillars—stewardship, resilience, and inclusive growth**—emphasizing ecosystem protection, climate adaptation, and sustainable blue economy opportunities (green shipping, offshore renewables, aquaculture, marine biotechnology).
- Global ocean finance is rising sharply, with initiatives like **BEFF (€25 billion pipeline, €8.7 billion new commitments)**, **Finance in Common Ocean Coalition (\$7.5 billion annually)**, and **COP30's**



One Ocean Partnership (\$20 billion by 2030) providing opportunities for India to mobilise regional funding.

- India can institutionalize regional leadership through mechanisms such as a proposed **Indian Ocean Blue Fund**, a **Regional Resilience and Ocean Innovation Hub**, and enhanced maritime domain awareness under India's SAGAR vision.
- Security in the Indian Ocean increasingly depends on **sustainability rather than military rivalry**, with threats like IUU fishing, coral degradation, and extreme weather undermining livelihoods and regional stability.
- India's readiness to ratify the **BBNJ Agreement**, leadership in UNOC3 outcomes, and potential agenda-setting through **IORA chairmanship** position it to champion global ocean governance rooted in cooperation and equity.

Definitions & Key Concepts

- **UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea):** International treaty governing maritime rights, jurisdiction, and ocean resource management; adopted 1982.
- **Common Heritage of Mankind:** Principle that resources of areas beyond national jurisdiction belong to all humanity and must be used for collective benefit.
- **Blue Economy:** Sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and environmental health.
- **IUU Fishing:** Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing that undermines marine biodiversity and economic security.
- **BBNJ Agreement:** Treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction addressing conservation, sustainable use, and equitable benefit-sharing of high-seas biodiversity.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51(c):** Encourages India to promote international peace, security, and respect for international law—supports India's ocean governance leadership.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Legal basis for protecting marine ecosystems and regulating coastal activities.
- **Maritime Zones Act, 1976:** Defines India's territorial waters, EEZ, and continental shelf consistent with UNCLOS principles.
- **Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notifications:** Govern sustainable coastal development and conservation.
- **India's National Maritime Security Strategy & SAGAR Doctrine:** Basis for linking maritime security with regional cooperation and sustainable development.

Additional Analytical Points

- India's maritime vision aligns with the evolving shift **from geopolitics to ocean sustainability**, recognizing that ecological collapse poses as much security risk as naval confrontation.
- Establishing **green shipping corridors** and **blue bonds** can attract global investment while reducing emissions.



- Supporting SIDS and African littorals through technology transfer and resilience-building enhances India's soft power and strategic credibility.
- The rise of ocean finance indicates a global acknowledgement that the **ocean is central to climate stability**, giving India leverage to shape the policy landscape.
- India's historic consistency—from Nehru to Indira Gandhi to present leaders—demonstrates its longstanding commitment to environmental justice and ocean stewardship.

Conclusion

India stands at a decisive moment: the Indian Ocean, long central to its identity, now demands leadership that blends sustainability, innovation, regional cooperation, and equitable development. With global finance mobilising for ocean action and new governance instruments such as the BBNJ Agreement emerging, India has the opportunity to shape a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable ocean future. By operationalising its vision—from SAGAR to Blue Economy frameworks—India can ensure that the Indian Ocean becomes not a zone of rivalry, but a model of global cooperation.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-II:** International treaties (UNCLOS, BBNJ), India's maritime diplomacy, SAGAR, IORA, global commons governance.
- **GS-III:** Blue economy, climate resilience, marine biodiversity, sustainable resource management, disaster preparedness.
- **Essay:** Themes on environment–development balance, ocean governance, global leadership, common heritage of mankind.
- **Prelims:** Key institutions (UNOC, IORA, BEFF), ocean treaties, blue bonds, CRZ norms, maritime zones.

5. IMF's 'C' Grade for India's National Accounts Statistics

Key Highlights

- The IMF recently gave India's national accounts statistics — including GDP and GVA estimation methodologies — a **'C' grade**, the second-lowest rating, raising concerns about data reliability even as Q2 recorded **8.2% growth**.
- IMF's concern primarily stems from India's practice of using **organised (formal) sector data as a proxy** to estimate growth in the large **unorganised (informal) sector**, which still accounts for nearly **30% of GDP** (excluding agriculture).
- Experts like **Pronab Sen** and **Arun Kumar** argue this proxy method becomes unreliable during periods of disruption (demonetisation, GST rollout, COVID-19), when the organised and unorganised sectors **move in opposite directions**.
- Over recent years, the organised sector expanded while the unorganised sector contracted, leading to **overestimation of actual GDP growth** when the proxy method is used.
- Quarterly GDP estimates are based on **assumptions and trend extrapolations** due to lack of real-time, disaggregated quarterly data — further weakening accuracy.





- Despite ongoing efforts to update the GDP base year and methodology, experts believe India **may not be able to fully address the IMF's concerns**, especially regarding unorganised-sector estimation.

Definitions & Key Concepts

- **GDP (Gross Domestic Product):** Total monetary value of all final goods and services produced within a country in a given period.
- **GVA (Gross Value Added):** Measures value of output minus intermediate consumption; $GDP = \Sigma GVA + \text{taxes} - \text{subsidies}$.
- **Organised Sector:** Enterprises registered under formal regulations with systematic data reporting.
- **Unorganised Sector:** Small-scale, informal, unregistered enterprises with limited or no formal data reporting mechanisms.
- **Base Year Revision:** Updating the year used for GDP calculations to reflect structural economic changes and improve accuracy.
- **Proxy Estimation:** Using available data from one sector to estimate the performance of another sector lacking direct data.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Collection of Statistics Act, 2008:** Empowers government agencies to collect economic data essential for national accounts.
- **MOSPI Mandate:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation is constitutionally responsible for producing reliable national statistical data.
- **Article 51(a)(h):** Promotes scientific temper — indirectly relevant to ensuring accuracy and integrity in statistical systems.
- **Planning and Statistical Governance:** Though not explicitly constitutional, national statistics form the backbone of economic policy, budget allocations, and parliamentary oversight.

Additional Analytical Points

- Accurate GDP estimation is crucial because it influences **monetary policy, fiscal decisions, welfare spending, foreign investment confidence**, and India's global credibility.
- The **informal sector's invisibility** in national accounts can distort assessments of poverty, inequality, employment, and MSME health — leading to suboptimal policy design.
- Media underreporting of IMF's concerns reveals **gaps in economic journalism**, limiting informed public debate on data quality.
- Strengthening India's statistical system requires **more frequent enterprise surveys, digitalisation of informal sector records, GST data integration**, and improved coordination between Centre and States.
- India's aim to become a **\$5 trillion economy** requires globally credible statistical foundations.

Conclusion

The IMF's 'C' grade highlights structural weaknesses in India's GDP estimation, particularly concerning the unorganised sector. While headline growth numbers appear strong, underlying methodological issues raise questions about accuracy and transparency. Improving statistical systems will require institutional reforms,



robust data collection mechanisms, and a stronger focus on informal sector dynamics. Credible national accounts are essential not only for policymaking but also for India's economic reputation.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-III:** GDP/GVA concepts, informal sector, data reliability, national income accounting, IMF assessments.
- **GS-II (Governance):** Institutional credibility, role of MOSPI, statistical reforms, transparency in public data systems.
- **Economy Prelims:** National accounts, base year revision, organised vs unorganised sector, Collection of Statistics Act.
- **Essay:** Themes on data integrity, economic governance, media responsibility, reliability of public institutions.

6. Govt. Likely to Rename MGNREGS to 'Pujya Bapu Gramin Rozgar Yojana'

Key Highlights

- The government is expected to introduce a Bill in the Winter Session to amend the MGNREGA Act, renaming the flagship scheme as “**Pujya Bapu Gramin Rozgar Yojana**”; the proposal has reportedly been cleared by the Union Cabinet.
- The scheme, originally enacted in **2005 as NREGA** and renamed **MGNREGA in 2009**, guarantees **100 days of wage employment** per rural household; the amended Bill may increase this to **125 days**.
- According to parliamentary data, the **average employment provided in the last five years is only 50.35 days**, reinforcing the scheme's role as a **fallback option** when no better opportunities exist.
- The government-appointed 2022 review panel (headed by Amarjeet Sinha) flagged **inter-State variations** and **lower expenditure in high-poverty States**; the amendment Bill may include **exclusionary clauses** based on economic indicators.
- The government is also considering **changes in the funding pattern**, potentially altering the Centre–State financial responsibilities within the scheme.
- No official press briefing was made about the renaming proposal, indicating political sensitivity around altering the title of a major welfare programme associated with Mahatma Gandhi.



Definitions & Key Concepts

- **MGNREGS (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme):** A rights-based wage employment programme guaranteeing 100 days of unskilled work to rural households.
- **Demand-Driven Scheme:** Employment must be provided when demanded; legally enforceable right.
- **Unskilled Manual Work:** Labour requiring no formal training—includes water conservation, land development, rural infrastructure creation, etc.
- **Exclusionary Clauses:** Provisions restricting eligibility or modifying allocation based on economic indicators.



- **Funding Pattern:** The proportion of expenditure shared between Centre and States—currently ~90:10 for most components.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **MGNREGA, 2005:** A statutory employment guarantee, strengthening livelihood security in rural areas.
- **Article 21:** Right to life includes the right to livelihood—MGNREGS operationalises this aspect.
- **Article 41 (DPSP):** Mandates the State to provide public assistance in unemployment; MGNREGS is a key instrument toward this goal.
- **Schedule I & II of MGNREGA:** Define permissible works, wage rates, transparency norms, and workers' rights.
- **Social Audit under Section 17:** Ensures community monitoring, transparency, and accountability.

Additional Analytical Points

- Increasing guaranteed workdays from 100 to 125 may strengthen rural incomes but requires **budgetary expansion** and **timely wage payments**, historically weak points.
- Introducing exclusionary clauses based on State-level economic indicators may lead to **unequal access** and contradict the universal, rights-based nature of MGNREGS.
- High inter-State variation in utilisation often correlates with **governance capacity**, not just poverty rates.
- Any alteration in Centre–State funding norms could spark **federal tensions**, as several States already face delayed reimbursements and wage liabilities.
- Renaming a major welfare scheme may have **political implications**, impacting public perception and legacy associations.

Conclusion

The proposed renaming of MGNREGS and amendments to expand workdays, alter eligibility norms, and modify funding patterns mark a significant restructuring of India's largest rural employment programme. While the changes may aim at efficiency and fiscal recalibration, concerns arise over preserving the scheme's rights-based character, inclusivity, and the constitutional mandate of livelihood support. A balanced approach is essential to ensure that reforms strengthen rather than dilute the rural safety net.

UPSC Relevance

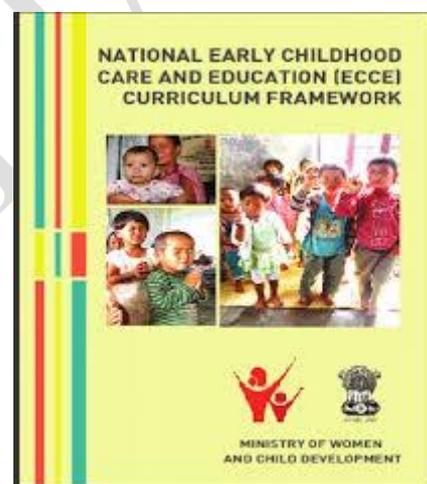
- **GS-II:** Welfare schemes, Centre–State relations, rights-based entitlements, governance challenges, social audits.
- **GS-III:** Rural development, employment generation, poverty alleviation, public expenditure, outcome-based policy redesign.
- **Polity/Economy Prelims:** MGNREGA features, funding pattern, statutory guarantees, Schedule I & II provisions.
- **Essay:** Topics on welfare reforms, rural livelihoods, federalism, and the politics of public policy renaming.



7. RS Resolution Seeks Free and Compulsory Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

Key Highlights

- The Rajya Sabha discussed a private member's resolution by Sudha Murty proposing a **new Article 21B** to guarantee **free and compulsory Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)** for children aged **3–6 years**, including nutrition, health services, and pre-primary learning.
- The resolution emphasises **universal access to quality ECCE** by strengthening **Anganwadi services**, which form the core delivery mechanism under ICDS.
- It highlights the crucial role of ECCE in building **lifelong learning capacity, cognitive development, school readiness, and improved human capital outcomes**.
- The proposal expands the current scope of the **Right to Education (Article 21A)**, which guarantees free and compulsory education only for children aged **6–14 years**, leaving the 3–6 age group uncovered.
- Sudha Murty appealed for constitutional recognition of ECCE as a **fundamental right**, arguing that early learning must benefit the entire life cycle of a child.
- The resolution reflects the policy emphasis of NEP 2020, which identifies **ECCE as foundational** and calls for universal access by 2030.



Definitions & Key Concepts

- **ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education):** Holistic development support for children aged 3–6 years, including health, nutrition, cognitive stimulation, pre-literacy and numeracy, and socio-emotional development.
- **Article 21A:** Guarantees the fundamental right to free and compulsory education for children 6–14 years.
- **Private Member's Resolution:** A resolution introduced by a non-minister; not binding but influential in shaping policy discourse.
- **Anganwadi Centres:** Grassroots institutions under ICDS providing nutrition, preschool education, health check-ups, and maternal services.
- **ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services):** Flagship programme addressing early childhood development and maternal health.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Right to life, interpreted by the Supreme Court to include the right to live with dignity, health, and development—ECCE can be linked to this.
- **Article 21A:** Currently covers education only for the 6–14 age group; ECCE inclusion would require **constitutional amendment**.
- **Directive Principles (Article 39(e),(f) & Article 45):** Direct the State to protect childhood and provide early childhood care and education.



- **Article 45 (post-86th Amendment):** Mandates the State to provide ECCE for children below 6 years but is *not a fundamental right*.
- **NEP 2020:** Calls ECCE a national priority; aims for universal access through Anganwadis, Balvatikas, and pre-primary schools.

Additional Analytical Points

- Constitutionalising ECCE would **strengthen legal accountability**, ensure funding continuity, and improve service quality across States.
- Strengthened Anganwadis could reduce long-term inequalities by improving **nutrition, learning outcomes, and health indicators** such as stunting and wasting.
- ECCE investment yields **high economic returns**, improving productivity and reducing remedial education and welfare costs.
- Implementing ECCE as a right requires **capacity building**, improved worker training, infrastructure upgrades, and inter-ministerial coordination.
- It may raise federal questions as education is a **Concurrent List** subject, requiring consensus among States for a constitutional amendment.
- ECCE reform aligns with global frameworks like **UN SDG 4.2 (Quality early childhood development and pre-primary education)**.

Conclusion

The RS resolution marks a significant push toward recognising ECCE as a **fundamental right**, acknowledging its foundational role in shaping long-term educational, cognitive, and health outcomes. By proposing a constitutional amendment and calling for strengthened Anganwadi systems, the resolution highlights a critical gap in India's rights-based education framework. If adopted, it could transform early childhood development policy and human capital formation in India.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-II:** Constitutional amendments, education rights, welfare schemes, ICDS, Anganwadi system, DPSPs, federal issues.
- **GS-II/III:** Human capital development, child welfare, nutrition, health and education linkages.
- **Prelims:** Article 21A, Article 45, ECCE concept, NEP 2020 provisions, ICDS components.
- **Essay:** Themes on children's rights, education reforms, demographic dividend, human development.

8. UNEA Adopts India's Proposal on Global Wildfire Management

Key Highlights

- The United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) formally adopted India's resolution titled **"Strengthening the Global Management of Wildfires"**, marking a major step in global environmental governance.
- India's proposal urges a shift from **reactive firefighting to proactive prevention**, highlighting climate-induced factors such as rising temperatures, erratic rainfall, and land-use change that increase wildfire risks.



- The resolution calls for **enhanced early-warning systems, improved risk assessments, and strengthened national and regional preparedness**, especially for climate-vulnerable countries.
- India underscored the **cascading ecological, economic, and social impacts** of extreme fires—ranging from forest degradation and biodiversity loss to public health crises and economic disruptions.
- Adoption at UNEA-7 strengthens global cooperation, enabling countries to develop **data-driven fire management frameworks**, build capacity, and promote technology transfer.
- The initiative aligns with India’s expanding climate leadership and supports commitments under the **Paris Agreement, SDG 13 (Climate Action), and SDG 15 (Life on Land)**.

Definitions & Key Concepts

- **Wildfire:** Uncontrolled fire occurring in forests, grasslands, or other natural landscapes, often intensified by climatic and anthropogenic factors.
- **Early-Warning System:** A coordinated mechanism that forecasts fire risks using satellite data, weather models, vegetation indices, and disseminates rapid alerts to authorities and communities.
- **Risk Assessment:** Systematic evaluation of environmental, climatic, and socio-economic factors to determine the likelihood and impact of wildfire events.
- **UNEA (United Nations Environment Assembly):** The world’s highest environmental decision-making body, responsible for setting global environmental policies.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions (India)

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife.
- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental duty of citizens to protect the natural environment, including forests.
- **Forest Conservation Act, 1980 & Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Provide regulatory frameworks for forest management, biodiversity conservation, and prevention of ecological degradation.
- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):** Includes measures relevant to fire risk management—particularly under the Green India Mission.

Additional Analytical Points

- Wildfires increasingly contribute to **carbon emissions, haze pollution, loss of livelihoods**, and displacement of tribal and forest-dependent communities.
- Climate change is altering fire regimes globally, making traditional firefighting approaches insufficient; hence the stress on **prevention, resilience, and ecosystem restoration**.
- India’s resolution strengthens South-South cooperation, especially benefiting **developing and forest-rich countries** in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.
- The move supports India’s expanding soft power in global environmental diplomacy and complements domestic wildfire initiatives using **ISRO satellite data and Forest Survey tools**.



- International collaboration can facilitate **capacity building, knowledge exchange, and financial mobilisation** for fire management.

Conclusion

India's wildfire management resolution at UNEA-7 marks a significant global endorsement of proactive climate resilience strategies. By emphasising early-warning mechanisms, risk assessments, and preventive action, the resolution recognises wildfires as a transboundary threat demanding coordinated international response. The decision strengthens India's global environmental leadership and contributes to long-term ecological sustainability.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-III:** Environment conservation, climate change, disaster management, forest governance, international environmental agreements.
- **GS-II:** Global environmental diplomacy, UNEA, India's climate leadership, multilateral cooperation.
- **Prelims:** UNEA, SDG 13 & 15, wildfire terminology, early-warning systems, environmental laws.
- **Essay:** Climate resilience, global commons, sustainable development, ecological security.

9. Centre Increases Minimum Support Price (MSP) for Copra

Key Highlights

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved an increase in the **Minimum Support Price (MSP) for copra** for the **2026 market season**.
- The MSP for **milling copra** (fair average quality) has been set at **₹12027 per quintal**, while **ball copra** has been fixed at **₹12500 per quintal**.
- These revisions represent an increase of **₹445 per quintal** for milling copra and **₹400 per quintal** for ball copra over the previous season.
- The MSP hike aims to ensure **better remuneration to coconut farmers**, encourage production, and provide a safety net against market price fluctuations.
- The decision aligns with the government's strategy to strengthen **agricultural income security** and stabilise prices for key plantation crops, especially in States like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh.
- The move is also linked to input cost increases and recommendations of the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**.

Definitions & Key Concepts

- **Copra:** Dried kernel of coconut used to extract coconut oil; classified mainly into **milling copra** (used for oil extraction) and **ball copra** (used mainly for edible purposes).
- **Minimum Support Price (MSP):** A guaranteed price announced by the government to protect farmers from distress sales and ensure minimum income support.
- **CCEA (Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs):** Responsible for major economic decisions, including MSP fixation.





- **CACP (Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices):** Advises the government on MSP based on factors like cost of cultivation, price trends, demand-supply, and farmer welfare.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Directive Principles (Article 38, Article 39(b),(c)):** Promote economic justice and equitable distribution of resources, supporting MSP as an instrument for farmer welfare.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Enables government intervention in agricultural markets to stabilise prices and protect farmers/consumers.
- **Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) Acts (State Laws):** Govern procurement and marketing of crops where MSP operations often take place.
- **Price Support Scheme (PSS):** Operational framework under which agencies like NAFED and NCCF procure copra at MSP.

Additional Analytical Points

- Copra MSP hikes benefit **coconut-growing regions**, enhancing rural livelihoods and supporting related industries such as coconut oil processing and copra trade.
- The MSP increase is significant amid rising **input costs (labour, fertilisers, irrigation)** and price volatility affected by global edible oil markets.
- Higher MSP may reduce dependence on **imported edible oils**, promoting domestic production and self-reliance.
- Timely procurement under PSS is essential; without effective procurement, MSP announcements may not translate into real income gains for farmers.
- The decision complements broader government initiatives under the **Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)** and **National Livestock and Plantation programmes**.

Conclusion

The MSP increase for copra strengthens price support mechanisms for farmers engaged in coconut cultivation. By ensuring higher returns and protecting them from market instability, the government aims to bolster rural income, promote agricultural sustainability, and enhance domestic edible oil production. Effective procurement and market linkages will be crucial for realising the full benefits of this policy change.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-III:** MSP system, agricultural pricing policy, plantation crops, farmer welfare, CACP recommendations.
- **GS-II:** Government policy formulation, Centre–State interplay in agricultural markets, economic justice principles.
- **Prelims:** MSP basics, CACP, PSS, types of copra (milling vs ball).
- **Essay:** Agricultural reforms, rural income security, market volatility and farmer protection.



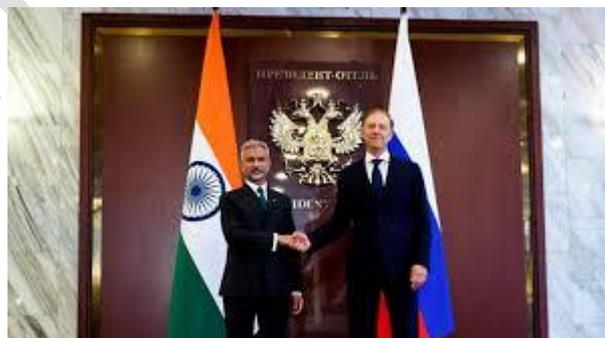
10. India Offers ‘Final’ Trade Deal to the U.S., Prioritises Removal of 25% Tariffs Linked to Russian Oil

Key Highlights

- India has presented a **“final” revised trade offer** to the U.S., prioritising the removal of the **additional 25% tariff imposed due to India's imports of Russian oil**, which forms part of the U.S.’s current 50% tariff on Indian goods.
- Under the proposal, India is willing to **“immediately” remove tariffs** on U.S. imports such as **almonds, walnuts, apples, industrial goods, and luxury motorcycles**, but only as part of a broader **Bilateral Trade Agreement**.
- Indian exporters have conveyed to the government that while they can manage a **25% tariff** (close to global averages around 19%), the **overall 50% tariff severely impacts competitiveness**, forcing them to absorb costs and reduce profit margins.
- U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer acknowledged India as a **“tough nut to crack”** but described India’s current offer as the **“best the U.S. has ever received”** from India.
- Negotiations between the Indian and U.S. teams (led by Deputy USTR Rick Switzer) are largely complete, and the final decision now rests with the **U.S. administration**.
- India has already been reducing Russian oil imports **even before** the U.S. imposed its penalty tariffs in August, suggesting possible diplomatic alignment.

Definitions & Key Concepts

- **Tariff:** A customs duty imposed on imported goods to regulate trade, protect domestic industries, or retaliate in trade disputes.
- **Reciprocal Tariff:** A tariff imposed in response to another country’s tariff action, often used to balance or counteract trade barriers.
- **Penalty Tariff:** An additional tariff imposed as a punitive measure for certain trade or geopolitical actions—here linked to India’s Russian oil imports.
- **Bilateral Trade Agreement:** A formal trade deal between two countries to lower tariffs, increase market access, and address barriers.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions (India)

- **Article 246 & Seventh Schedule:** Place trade and commerce with foreign nations under the **Union List**, giving the Centre exclusive authority over trade negotiations.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Empowers the government to formulate trade policy, impose or remove restrictions, and regulate imports/exports.
- **Customs Act, 1962:** Governs tariff imposition, exemptions, and customs administration.
- **Parliamentary Oversight:** Major trade agreements may require parliamentary scrutiny, though executive authority handles negotiations.

Additional Analytical Points



- The tariff dispute reflects **broader Indo-U.S. trade tensions**, including issues of market access, digital trade, agriculture, and geopolitical considerations around Russia.
- India's willingness to drop tariffs on U.S. tree nuts and luxury goods signals **strategic concessions** aimed at securing relief for sectors more severely impacted by U.S. tariffs.
- The outcome will significantly affect **export competitiveness** of Indian goods, especially in labour-intensive industries such as textiles, leather, engineering goods, and food products.
- The dispute also highlights how **geopolitics (Russian oil imports)** increasingly intersects with **trade policy**, shaping bilateral negotiations.
- Successful removal of the 25% penalty tariff could stabilise Indian exports to the U.S., one of India's **largest trading partners** and a key market for MSMEs.

Conclusion

India's "final" trade proposal to the U.S. reflects a calibrated negotiation strategy aimed at securing relief from high penalty tariffs linked to Russian oil imports. While India has offered substantial tariff concessions on several U.S. goods, its central objective remains the rollback of the additional 25% duty that burdens Indian exporters. The final decision now hinges on the U.S. administration, with significant implications for bilateral trade relations.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-II:** India–U.S. relations, trade diplomacy, role of executive in foreign policy, global geopolitical linkages with trade.
- **GS-III:** International trade, tariff policy, export competitiveness, impact of sanctions and global oil trade.
- **Prelims:** Tariff terminology, FTDR Act, Customs Act, bilateral trade agreements, USTR, penalty tariffs.
- **Essay:** Themes on global trade politics, economic diplomacy, challenges of multipolar trade relations, sanctions and economic sovereignty.

11. Technical Textile Mission Likely to Be Extended

Key Highlights

- The National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM), launched in **2020** with a total outlay of **₹1480 crore** and scheduled to end in **March 2026**, is likely to be **extended by two years**, as nearly **50% of allocated funds remain unused**.
- The Mission aims to strengthen India's capacity in **research, innovation, and product development** in the rapidly growing global technical textiles sector.
- It also prioritises **market development, export promotion, and education & training**, aiming to build a skilled workforce and enhance India's competitiveness in high-value textiles.
- Extension of the Mission is expected to accelerate adoption of technical textiles in key sectors such as **healthcare, defence, infrastructure, automobiles, agriculture**, and disaster management.
- The Mission aligns with India's strategy to reduce dependence on imports, enhance domestic manufacturing under **Atmanirbhar Bharat**, and integrate into global value chains.



- The move reflects recognition of technical textiles as a **sunrise industry** with high potential for export earnings, innovation, and employment generation.



Definitions & Key Concepts

- **Technical Textiles:** Functional textiles designed for performance rather than aesthetics, used in specialised sectors—examples include geotextiles, medical textiles, protective clothing, agro-textiles, and industrial filters.
- **NTTM (National Technical Textiles Mission):** A centrally sponsored initiative to promote research, innovation, market expansion, and skill development in technical textiles.
- **Geotextiles:** Technical textiles used in civil engineering for soil reinforcement, filtration, and road construction.
- **Meditech/Agrotech/Mobiltech:** Subcategories of technical textiles used in medical applications, agriculture, and automobiles respectively.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Union List (Entry 52):** Empowers the Union government to regulate industries deemed necessary in the public interest, including textiles.
- **Entry 33 of Concurrent List:** Allows both Centre and States to legislate on production, supply, and distribution of key commodities, including textiles.
- **Textile Policy Frameworks:** Governed by the Ministry of Textiles under various schemes promoting innovation, exports, and skill development.
- **National Skill Development Mission:** Supports skill training for technical textiles workforce.

Additional Analytical Points

- India's technical textile penetration (between 5–10%) remains low compared to developed economies (30–70%), indicating significant growth potential.
- Strengthening domestic R&D can reduce reliance on foreign technology and foster indigenous innovation.
- Export promotion under NTTM can help India tap into a **global technical textiles market valued over \$250 billion**.
- Education and training components are critical to creating a specialised workforce for high-technology manufacturing sectors.
- Infrastructure and large public works projects (roads, railways, ports) can boost demand for **geotextiles**, contributing to long-term cost savings.

Conclusion

Extending the National Technical Textiles Mission provi

des India with a strategic opportunity to accelerate innovation, expand market adoption, and enhance global competitiveness in a high-growth sector. With significant funds still available and global demand rising, the



Mission's extension will support self-reliance, export diversification, and skill enhancement across multiple industries.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-III:** Industrial development, innovation, Sunrise sectors, Atmanirbhar Bharat, export promotion.
- **GS-II:** Government schemes, Centre–State coordination, policy implementation challenges.
- **Prelims:** Technical textiles, NTTM components, geotextiles, meditech, mobiltech.
- **Essay:** Themes on innovation-led growth, manufacturing transformation, technology-driven development.

12. Secrets of Himalayan Air Movements and Their Influence on Monsoons

Key Highlights

- Indian scientists from **ARIES (DST)** and **ISRO's Space Physics Laboratory** have conducted the **first-ever direct, high-resolution, long-term measurements** of vertical air motion over the central Himalayas during the Asian Summer Monsoon (ASM).
- Using India's indigenously developed **Stratosphere–Troposphere (ST) Radar** at Nainital, scientists measured vertical air velocities as low as **5 cm s⁻¹**, filling a major data gap previously dependent on indirect balloon or satellite-based observations.
- The study identified a **persistent downward-moving air mass between 10–11 km altitude** and confirmed a **steady upward flow above 12 km**, revealing a more complex vertical circulation inside the **Asian Summer Monsoon Anticyclone (ASMA)** than previously understood.
- Findings show a “**two-step**” vertical transport process from the lower troposphere to the stratosphere, improving understanding of monsoon dynamics, pollutant movement, and greenhouse gas transport.
- These insights can significantly enhance **monsoon prediction models**, early warning systems for weather-related disasters, and regional water and agricultural planning.
- The study, published in *Earth and Space Science (AGU)*, has major implications for **air quality assessment**, climate resilience, and long-term monsoon forecasting for South Asia.

Definitions & Key Concepts

- **Vertical Air Motion:** Upward or downward movement of air within the atmosphere, critical for cloud formation, rainfall, and pollutant transport.
- **Asian Summer Monsoon Anticyclone (ASMA):** A large, upper-level atmospheric circulation system forming during the monsoon months; influences monsoon rainfall, climate patterns, and stratospheric transport.
- **Stratosphere–Troposphere Radar (ST Radar):** Ground-based radar used for high-precision monitoring of atmospheric winds and vertical air movement.
- **Troposphere/Stratosphere:** The lowest two layers of the atmosphere; vertical motion across these layers affects monsoon strength, rainfall distribution, and climatic processes.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental duty to protect and improve the natural environment, supporting scientific research for climate and ecological protection.



- **Environment (Protection) Act,1986:** Enables the government to develop climate and air quality monitoring mechanisms.
- **Disaster Management Act,2005:** Requires scientific forecasting systems, including monsoon prediction and early warning tools, for disaster preparedness and mitigation.
- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):** Promotes climate modelling and research, feeding into missions such as the National Water Mission and National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture.

Additional Analytical Points

- Improved monsoon prediction assists in **agricultural planning**, reducing crop losses and strengthening food security across South Asia.
- Enhanced understanding of vertical motion enables better modelling of **pollutant dispersion**, helping refine India's air quality management strategies under NCAP.
- The study supports India's move towards **self-reliance in atmospheric research**, leveraging indigenous technology and long-term scientific infrastructure.
- Findings are crucial for predicting **extreme weather events**, which are increasing due to climate change, improving resilience for millions dependent on monsoon patterns.
- Insights into vertical circulation strengthen global climate models, enabling India to contribute meaningfully to international climate science.

Conclusion

The breakthrough measurements of vertical air movement over the Himalayas mark a significant advancement in monsoon science. By decoding complex airflow patterns within the ASMA, Indian scientists have opened pathways for more accurate monsoon forecasts, improved disaster preparedness, enhanced air quality assessments, and stronger climate models. This research elevates India's scientific leadership in understanding one of the world's most influential climate systems.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS-I:** Indian monsoon mechanisms, climatic influences of the Himalayas, atmospheric circulation.
- **GS-III:** Climate science, air quality, disaster management, agriculture–climate linkages, environmental sustainability.
- **Prelims:** ASMA, ST Radar, vertical air motion, troposphere–stratosphere layers, monsoon dynamics.
- **Essay:** Climate change impacts, monsoon variability, science-led governance, environmental resilience.