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# VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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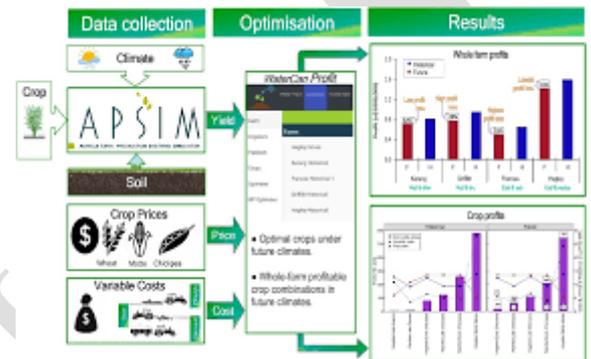
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## 1. Agrarian Distress in 2025: Challenges of Climate and Market Volatility

- **Climate-Induced Crop Damage:** Severe monsoon rains in 2025 led to devastating floods in Punjab, Haryana, and Maharashtra (Marathwada), inundating over 200,000 hectares of farmland and causing significant soil erosion and income loss.
- **Market Price Slump below MSP:** Despite a surplus harvest, farmers faced severe financial stress as market prices for grains, pulses, and oilseeds (soybean, groundnut, sunflower) fell significantly below the Minimum Support Price (MSP).
- **Macroeconomic Imbalance:** While record-low consumer food inflation (0.25% in October) benefited urban consumers, it triggered rural deflation, severely eroding the purchasing power of the 42% of the population dependent on agriculture.
- **Institutional Procurement Gaps:** While procurement is robust for rice and wheat, experts highlight that coverage for oilseeds and pulses remains uneven and often symbolic, failing to prevent distress sales in many regional mandis.
- **Strategic Government Interventions:** The Centre launched the "Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses" (₹11,440 crore) for 100% procurement of tur, urad, and masoor, alongside the extension of PM-AASHA to stabilize oilseed prices through FY26.
- **Structural Income Shift:** Recent data suggests a worrying trend where a major share of farm household income is increasingly derived from manual labor rather than cultivation, signaling a decline in the profitability of farming.



### Key Definitions

- **Minimum Support Price (MSP):** A "floor price" set by the Government of India to protect farmers against excessive falls in price during bumper production years. It is based on recommendations by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
- **Distress Sale:** A situation where farmers are forced to sell their produce at prices lower than the cost of production or MSP due to a lack of storage facilities, immediate need for cash, or absence of government procurement.
- **Deflation in Agriculture:** A decrease in the general price level of agricultural goods, which, while lowering food inflation, reduces the nominal income of producers.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 38:** Mandates the State to secure a social order for the promotion of the welfare of the people and to minimize inequalities in income.
- **Article 48:** Directs the State to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines.
- **Seventh Schedule:** Agriculture is a State List subject (Entry 14), while "Price Control" and "Trade and Commerce in, and the production, supply and distribution of foodstuffs" fall under the Concurrent List (Entries 33 & 34).



- **PM-AASHA:** An umbrella scheme aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to farmers, comprising the Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS), and Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPSS).

## Conclusion

The agrarian crisis of 2025 underscores the "double whammy" of climate change and market inefficiency. While the government has initiated missions for self-reliance in pulses and extended procurement schemes, the benefits remain concentrated in specific crops and regions. For sustainable rural growth, India must transition from mere "price support" to a "comprehensive income support" model that integrates climate-resilient infrastructure with predictable, broad-based procurement operations.

## UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; Issues arising out of their design and implementation.
- **General Studies III:** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and MSP; Public Distribution System; Food security; Economics of animal-rearing; Disaster management (floods).
- **Key Themes:** Doubling Farmers' Income, Climate-Smart Agriculture, Price Stabilization Fund, and Rural Inflation vs. Urban Inflation dynamics.

## 2. Crisis of Definition: The Aravalli Range and the Mining Conflict

- **Definitional Ambiguity:** Despite utilizing satellite imagery and expert committees since 2024, the Union Environment Ministry struggled to establish uniform technical criteria to define the Aravalli range across Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.
- **Judicial Compulsion:** The formation of the final sub-committee in August 2025 was prompted only by the Supreme Court's threat of contempt proceedings against Ministry officials for persistent delays in protecting the ecologically fragile hills.
- **Ecological vs. Economic Conflict:** The definition process shifted from purely scientific parameters to a "balancing act" between ecological conservation and the National Mineral Policy 2019, which prioritizes mining of critical minerals for economic growth.
- **The 100-Metre Threshold:** The current definition under scrutiny allegedly protects only hills higher than 100 metres, potentially leaving the vast majority of the 700km range vulnerable to quarrying, habitat fragmentation, and environmental degradation.
- **Administrative Safeguards:** Following public outcry and social media backlash, the Environment Ministry has halted new mining licenses until the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) prepares a "Management Plan for Sustainable Mining."
- **Ecological Significance:** The Aravallis act as a "green lung" for the National Capital Region (NCR) and a natural barrier against the eastward expansion of the Thar Desert; any dilution in their protection could accelerate desertification.





## Key Definitions

- **Aravalli Range:** One of the world's oldest fold mountain systems, extending approximately 700km. It serves as a groundwater recharge zone and a climate regulator for Northwest India.
- **Critical Minerals:** Minerals such as lithium, cobalt, and rare earth elements that are essential for high-tech industry and green energy transitions, often cited as the justification for mining in ecologically sensitive zones.
- **Fold Mountains:** Mountains created where two or more of Earth's tectonic plates are pushed together. At these colliding, compressing boundaries, rocks and debris are warped and folded into rocky outcrops and hills.

## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that mandates the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Article 51A(g):** A Fundamental Duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980:** Governs the diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes like mining, often at the center of Aravalli legal disputes.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Provides the legal framework for the Centre to issue notifications (like the Aravalli Notification of 1992) to restrict industrial activities in sensitive areas.

## Conclusion

The struggle to define the Aravallis highlights a systemic tension in Indian environmental governance: the friction between "Ease of Doing Business" and "Ecological Integrity." By limiting protection to hills above a specific height (100 metres), the government risks fragmented conservation. A scientific definition must precede economic policy to ensure that the Aravallis continue to serve as a biological and climatic shield for North India.

## UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies I:** Geography of India (Physical features, ancient fold mountains, desertification).
- **General Studies II:** Statutory, regulatory, and various quasi-judicial bodies (Supreme Court's role in environmental jurisprudence).
- **General Studies III:** Conservation, environmental pollution, and degradation; Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).
- **Ethics (GS IV):** Ethical dilemma between development and environment; Environmental ethics in policy-making.

## 3. Debt Management and Fiscal Consolidation: The Telangana Strategy

- **Mounting Interest Burden:** Telangana faces a significant fiscal challenge with interest payments reaching ₹18,486 crore by November 2025, nearly 95% of the annual budget estimate. Projections suggest interest costs could exceed ₹25,000 crore by the end of the fiscal year, consuming nearly 10% of the State's revenue receipts.
- **Legacy Debt and Capital Misalignment:** A substantial portion of the high-interest debt is linked to large-scale infrastructure projects like the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project. Technical failures and



delayed returns from these projects have created a "debt trap" scenario where the state must borrow further just to service existing interest.

- **Strategic Debt Swapping:** To mitigate this, the Finance Department secured Union Ministry approval to swap high-interest, short-tenure loans worth ₹26,103 crore for low-interest, longer-tenure borrowings. This restructuring aims to reduce the immediate outflow of funds and stabilize the state's debt-to-GSDP ratio.
- **Commitment to Welfare and Growth:** Despite the liquidity crunch, the state has prioritized human capital by ensuring the timely payment of salaries and clearing pending employee dues (releasing ₹700 crore monthly). This is part of a broader shift to "balance development" while maintaining administrative stability.
- **Resource Mobilization and Leakage Control:** The government is focusing on institutional reforms, such as Aadhaar-based e-signatures for paperless bill clearance, to plug revenue leakages. Simultaneously, initiatives like the Telangana Rising Global Summit are designed to attract long-term investments and broaden the tax base.
- **Role of Cooperative Federalism:** The Union Finance Ministry's nod for loan restructuring and the increase in the state's borrowing limit (by ₹17,000 crore) highlight the critical role of Centre-State coordination in managing sub-national debt and ensuring macroeconomic stability.



### Key Definitions

- **Debt Swapping:** A financial strategy where an entity replaces existing high-cost debt with new debt at lower interest rates or better terms, reducing the overall cost of borrowing.
- **Revenue Receipts:** Government income that neither creates a liability nor reduces assets (e.g., taxes, grants). When interest payments consume a large share of these, it reduces "fiscal space" for development.
- **Committed Expenditure:** Mandatory government spending that cannot be easily reduced in the short term, primarily consisting of salaries, pensions, and interest payments.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 293:** Defines the borrowing power of States. Under Clause (3), a State cannot raise any loan without the Centre's consent if it has outstanding liabilities to the Union Government. This provides the Centre with oversight on state debt sustainability.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003:** While the Central Act sets overall targets, States have their own versions (e.g., Telangana FRBM Act). It mandates a ceiling on fiscal deficits (usually 3% of GSDP) and debt-to-GSDP ratios to ensure long-term fiscal prudence.
- **Article 280:** The Finance Commission recommendations often guide the "performance-based" borrowing limits for states, linking higher borrowing permissions to reforms in sectors like power or ease of doing business.



## Conclusion

The fiscal situation in Telangana illustrates the broader challenge of "debt sustainability" facing many Indian states. While high-interest loan swapping provides temporary breathing room, long-term stability depends on converting "unproductive debt" into "productive assets." Success will be measured by the state's ability to transition from a cycle of borrowing for interest repayment to a model of investment-led growth.

## UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, and development; Government Budgeting; Fiscal Policy and the FRBM framework.
- **General Studies II:** Statutory, regulatory, and various quasi-judicial bodies; Centre-State financial relations and the role of the Finance Commission.
- **Key Themes:** Debt-to-GSDP ratio, Cooperative Federalism in financial management, and the impact of populist schemes on state exchequers.

## 4. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) in Medical Education: A Critical Evaluation

- **Expansion vs. Privatization:** State governments, like Andhra Pradesh, are adopting PPP models to expand medical colleges (proposing 10 to 11 new institutions) to bridge the doctor-patient gap, though critics argue this risks "privatizing" public assets by leasing district hospitals to private entities for up to 66 years.
- **Complex Fee Structures:** To ensure fiscal sustainability, a three-tier fee model is often proposed (e.g., 50% subsidized at ₹15,000, 35% at ₹12 lakh, and 15% for NRIs at ₹20 lakh), raising concerns about equitable access for merit-based students from poor backgrounds.
- **Risk Asymmetry and Incentives:** Current policy frameworks under NITI Aayog guidelines may suffer from uneven risk-sharing. Private investors may be disincentivized by high quotas for "free" patients (70% beds at Ayushman Bharat rates), potentially leading to shortcuts in faculty recruitment or "under-the-table" fees to maintain profitability.
- **Fragmentation of Public Health:** Critics emphasize that carving out district hospitals for PPPs can fragment the referral chain between primary, secondary, and tertiary care, hindering the organic development of a vertically integrated public health system.
- **Quality and Regulatory Capacity:** India's "soft state" capacity to enforce complex medical contracts and National Medical Commission (NMC) standards remains a bottleneck, with fears that commercialization will drive graduates toward urban or foreign markets rather than rural public service.
- **Technological Disruption:** Advancing medical technology and e-healthcare (like Jan Aushadhi and telemedicine) suggest that massive physical hospital expansions (e.g., 650 beds) may need a more evidence-based, flexible reassessment rather than a uniform statewide rollout.



## Key Definitions

- **Viability Gap Funding (VGF):** A one-time or deferred grant provided by the government to support infrastructure projects that are economically justified but lack commercial viability.



- **Concessionaire Agreement:** A long-term legal contract between a government entity and a private partner, defining roles, risks, and revenue-sharing for managing a public asset (e.g., a district hospital).
- **Capitation Fee:** An illegal premium charged by educational institutions over and above the prescribed fees, often used to bypass merit-based admissions.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The "Right to Life" has been interpreted by the Supreme Court to include the "Right to Health," placing a primary obligation on the State to provide affordable healthcare.
- **Article 47 (DPSP):** Mandates the State to regard the improvement of public health as its primary duty and to raise the level of nutrition and standard of living.
- **Schedule VII:** "Education" and "Public Health and Sanitation; Hospitals and Dispensaries" fall under the Concurrent and State Lists, respectively, allowing both Centre and State to legislate on PPP frameworks.
- **NITI Aayog Model Agreement:** A guiding framework for linking private medical colleges with functional district hospitals to augment medical seats and clinical training infrastructure.

### Conclusion

The transition toward PPPs in medical education is a pragmatic response to "fiscal stringency," but it risks compromising "social equity." Success depends not on the number of colleges opened, but on the State's institutional capacity to regulate private partners. Without robust vertical integration and a focus on subsidizing doctors for rural service, the PPP route may create a two-tier system that prioritizes "investor profit" over "citizen welfare."

### UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health and Education; Governance and PPP models.
- **General Studies III:** Infrastructure; Mobilization of resources; E-governance and the impact of technology on service delivery.
- **Ethics (GS IV):** Ethical dilemmas in the commercialization of essential services like healthcare and education; Public vs. Private interest.

## 5. Vehicular Emissions vs. Stubble Burning: Rethinking Environmental Liability in Delhi-NCR

- **Primary Pollution Sources:** In Delhi's National Capital Region (NCR), vehicular emissions are the dominant source of air pollutants, including PM2.5, carbon monoxide, benzene, and nitrogen oxides. However, the narrative often disproportionately blames seasonal stubble burning by farmers in Punjab and Haryana for the year-round air quality crisis.
- **Polluter Pays Principle (PPP) in India:** Institutionalized by the Supreme Court in the *Vellore Citizens Welfare Forum* case (1996), PPP mandates that those who damage the environment must bear the costs of restoration. While a cornerstone of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) Act 2010, its application remains complex in urban settings where multiple "point" and "non-point" sources overlap.



- **Proportionality in Liability:** International jurisprudence, specifically the European Court of Justice's *Standley* case (1999), introduces "proportionality" to PPP. This suggests that seasonal contributors (like farmers) should not be held solely liable for pollutants generated by permanent industrial and vehicular sources, advocating for a more balanced allocation of responsibility.
- **Trans-boundary Air Pollution:** Air pollution is increasingly recognized as a regional and global phenomenon rather than a localized issue. Precedents like the *Trail Smelter* case (1941) and international agreements like the *Gothenburg Protocol* highlight that PM<sub>2.5</sub> travels long distances, necessitating interstate and international cooperation beyond simple punitive measures.
- **Shift to "Government-Pays" Principle:** Due to administrative challenges and the difficulty in quantifying specific damages from individual polluters, India has seen a shift toward a "Government-Pays" model. Here, the state bears the cost of monitoring and remediation, reflecting a welfare-oriented approach that often fails to force private entities to internalize their environmental costs.
- **Judicial Activism vs. Executive Failure:** With the executive and specialized environmental authorities often facing administrative paralysis, the Indian judiciary has stepped in to create state obligations for air quality. However, this "activist" approach sometimes prioritizes corrective justice (compensation to victims) over preventive institutional reforms.

### Key Definitions

- **Fine Particulate Matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>):** Atmospheric particulate matter with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometres. They are small enough to invade even the smallest airways and enter the bloodstream, posing significant health risks.
- **Non-Point Source Pollution:** Pollution that does not originate from a single discrete source (like a pipe or factory stack) but from diffuse areas, such as agricultural runoff or city-wide vehicular exhaust.
- **Cost Internalization:** An economic requirement where a firm or individual must include the cost of their "externalities" (like pollution) in the final price of their goods or services.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Mandates the State to endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard forests and wildlife.
- **Article 51A(g):** Establishes a Fundamental Duty for every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981:** The primary legislation intended to control air pollution in India, establishing the Central and State Pollution Control Boards (CPCB/SPCB).
- **National Green Tribunal (NGT) Act, 2010:** Provides for the effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation, specifically incorporating the Polluter Pays Principle.

### Conclusion

The air quality crisis in Delhi-NCR demands a transition from "seasonal blame" to "systemic accountability." While the Polluter Pays Principle is legally established, its effectiveness is hindered by a lack of proportionality and a reliance on the "Government-Pays" model. Addressing urban pollution requires



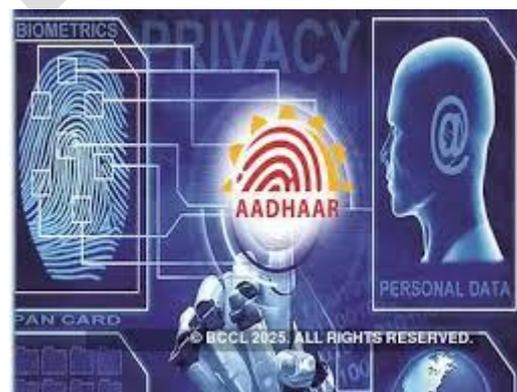
a robust framework that internalizes the costs of vehicular and industrial emissions while recognizing the trans-boundary nature of air pollutants through interstate cooperation.

### UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Government policies and interventions for development; Judiciary's role in environmental protection; Issues relating to the executive and bureaucracy.
- **General Studies III:** Environmental pollution and degradation; Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA); Role of the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and international environmental conventions.
- **Key Themes:** Sustainable Development, Polluter Pays Principle vs. Precautionary Principle, and the socio-economic impacts of the "Green lungs" vs. industrial growth debate.

## 6. Strengthening Aadhaar Infrastructure: Service Expansion and Data Integrity

- **Infrastructure Expansion:** The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has launched a strategic plan to increase the number of full-service Aadhaar Seva Kendras (ASK) from 88 to 473 by September 2026. This expansion aims to ensure that at least one such centre is available for every two districts, significantly reducing travel for adult applicants.
- **Targeted Adult Services:** While children can be enrolled at post offices, certain services for adults—such as biometric updates and changes to names or dates of birth beyond specific limits—require physical visits to full-fledged centres. The expansion is designed to facilitate these complex demographic and biometric modifications.
- **Curbing Illegal Immigration:** In response to security concerns, UIDAI has implemented a "field verification" mandate for new adult applicants. Verification is conducted by district administrations to ensure that Aadhaar, while a proof of residence, is not misused to imply citizenship or facilitate illegal stay.
- **Enhanced Data Integrity:** To prevent fraud, UIDAI has tightened rules regarding the "Date of Birth" (DoB). Holders are generally allowed only one correction in their lifetime via an affidavit; a second change is strictly prohibited to maintain the sanctity of the Central Identities Data Repository (CIDR).
- **Digital Integration:** UIDAI is collaborating with Google to map Aadhaar centres on Google Maps for easier public access. Furthermore, a new Aadhaar app utilizing AI and ML for automated grievance redressal is in development to enhance the digital experience for residents.
- **Inclusivity for NRIs and OCIs:** Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) with valid Indian passports and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs) residing in India for 182 days or more are eligible for Aadhaar. For these groups, providing a valid email ID is mandatory during the enrolment process.



### Key Definitions

- **Aadhaar Seva Kendra (ASK):** Specialized, UIDAI-operated centres that offer a single-window environment for Aadhaar enrolment and update services under direct supervision.
- **Field Verification:** A physical validation process performed by local authorities (like Circle Officers or Deputy Commissioners) to verify the residential status and documents of an applicant before an Aadhaar number is generated.



- **Biometric Exception:** A provision in the Aadhaar ecosystem to enroll individuals who cannot provide standard fingerprints or iris scans due to physical disabilities or injury.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **The Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and Other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016:** Provides the legal backing for Aadhaar. It was notably passed as a **Money Bill** under **Article 110**, a move upheld by the Supreme Court as the primary aim is the delivery of state subsidies.
- **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017):** A landmark 9-judge bench judgment that declared the **Right to Privacy** a fundamental right under **Article 21**. It established a three-fold test for any state interference: Legality, Need (Legitimate State Aim), and Proportionality.
- **Section 7 of the Aadhaar Act:** Mandates Aadhaar for availing subsidies, benefits, or services for which expenditure is incurred from the **Consolidated Fund of India**.
- **Section 57 (Struck Down):** The Supreme Court struck down the portion of this section that allowed private corporations to use Aadhaar for authentication (e.g., for SIM cards or bank accounts), limiting its mandatory use to state welfare schemes.

### Conclusion

The evolution of UIDAI toward a more robust, verify-first model reflects the dual challenge of ensuring "Ease of Living" and "National Security." By expanding physical infrastructure and tightening data update norms, the government aims to transform Aadhaar from a mere identity number into a tamper-proof digital anchor for India's welfare architecture. However, the success of this phase depends on the efficiency of district-level field verifications and the prevention of exclusion among genuine residents.

### UPSC Relevance

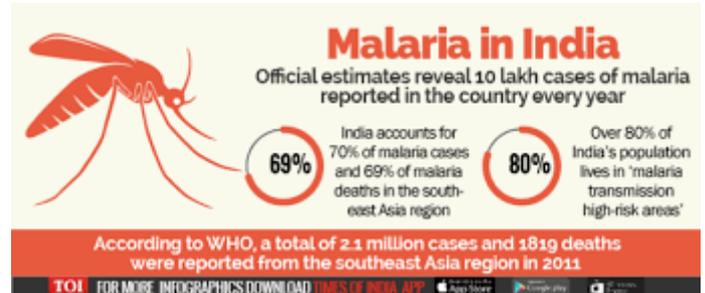
- **General Studies II:** Governance, Government Policies and Interventions, Transparency and Accountability, and the role of Statutory Bodies.
- **General Studies III:** Internal Security (illegal immigration), Science and Technology (AI/ML in governance), and Economic Development (Targeted Subsidies/DBT).
- **Key Themes:** Right to Privacy vs. State Surveillance, Digital India mission, and the constitutional validity of the Money Bill route for legislative enactments.

## 7. Invasive Urban Vectors: A New Challenge to India's 2030 Malaria Goal

- **Urban Malaria Surge:** The "Malaria Elimination Technical Report 2025" identifies the invasive mosquito species **Anopheles stephensi** as a critical threat to India's elimination goals. Unlike traditional rural vectors, this species thrives in metropolitan areas like Delhi by breeding in artificial containers, construction sites, and overhead tanks.
- **Aggressive Elimination Targets:** India is pursuing a dual timeline: an intermediate goal of achieving **zero indigenous cases by 2027** and complete **national elimination by 2030**. This aligns with the WHO Global Technical Strategy for Malaria (2016–2030).
- **Significant Burden Reduction:** Over the last decade, India has achieved an 82%–85% reduction in cases (dropping from 11.7 lakh in 2015 to ~2.27 lakh in 2024) and a 78% decline in malaria-related deaths, transitioning the country into the "pre-elimination" phase.



- **Regional and Border Challenges:** Transmission remains concentrated in high-burden "pockets" within **Odisha, Tripura, and Mizoram**. Additionally, cross-border transmission from Myanmar and Bangladesh complicates efforts in India's northeastern states.
- **Operational Bottlenecks:** Key hurdles include **asymptomatic infections**, insecticide and drug resistance, inconsistent reporting by the private sector, and logistical gaps in reaching remote tribal and forested areas.
- **Strategic Priorities:** The 2025 report emphasizes strengthening real-time surveillance through the **Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP)**, enhancing entomological capacity, and ensuring supply chain reliability for diagnostics and artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACT).



### Key Definitions

- **Anopheles stephensi:** A highly adaptable and invasive malaria vector that is "endophilic" (rests indoors) and "urbanophilic," making it resistant to traditional rural-focused vector control measures.
- **Annual Parasite Incidence (API):** The number of confirmed malaria cases per 1,000 population per year. An API of less than 1 is the threshold for entering the malaria elimination phase.
- **Indigenous Case:** A malaria infection contracted locally within a specific area, as opposed to an "imported case" brought in from another region or country.
- **Integrated Vector Management (IVM):** A strategic approach to control mosquito populations using a combination of environmental management, chemical control (like Indoor Residual Spray), and biological methods (like larvivorous fish).

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 47 (DPSP):** Mandates the State to regard the improvement of public health as among its primary duties.
- **Article 21:** The "Right to Life" encompasses the right to a healthy environment and access to essential healthcare, as interpreted by various Supreme Court rulings.
- **Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897:** Provides the government with the power to take special measures and prescribe regulations to prevent the spread of dangerous epidemic diseases.
- **National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME) 2016–2030:** The primary policy document outlining the roadmap for a malaria-free India, categorizing states based on transmission intensity.

### Conclusion

India stands at a critical juncture in its public health journey. While the massive reduction in malaria cases since 2015 is a testament to strong programmatic commitment, the emergence of urban transmission through invasive vectors like *Anopheles stephensi* necessitates a shift from "generalized control" to "city-specific surveillance." Success by 2030 will depend on the government's ability to integrate private sector reporting and address the "last mile" challenges in tribal and border regions through data-driven operational research.



## UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Issues relating to the development and management of the Social Sector/Services relating to Health; Government policies and interventions.
- **General Studies III:** Science and Technology—developments and their applications in daily life (Vector control, IHIP); Challenges to internal security (Border health security).
- **Prelims Focus:** 2030 Elimination Goal, 2027 Zero Indigenous Case Goal, Characteristics of *Anopheles stephensi*, and the National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP).

## 8. U.S. Military Intervention in Nigeria: Counter-Terrorism and Global Geopolitics

- **U.S. Kinetic Action in West Africa:** On December 25, 2025, the U.S. military conducted precision airstrikes using Tomahawk missiles and MQ-9 Reaper drones against Islamic State (IS) enclaves in Sokoto State, Northwest Nigeria. This marks a significant escalation in U.S. military involvement in the Sahel-Gulf of Guinea corridor under the Trump administration.
- **Targeting the Lakurawa Group:** Security analysts identify the target as the "Lakurawa" (or ISSP—Islamic State Sahel Province), a lethal insurgent group that recently re-emerged along the Niger-Nigeria border. Unlike the better-known ISWAP in the northeast, Lakurawa operates in the northwest, filling security vacuums created by stalled joint border patrols.
- **Bilateral Coordination vs. Sovereignty:** Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed the strikes were conducted with "full involvement" and strategic intelligence sharing. This cooperation is framed as consistent with international law and mutual respect for sovereignty, though it highlights the Nigerian military's reliance on foreign technical support to manage domestic insurgencies.
- **Framing of Religious Persecution:** The U.S. administration justified the strikes as a defense of "innocent Christians," following the recent designation of Nigeria as a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC). However, Nigerian officials and independent observers emphasize that the security crisis is a complex regional conflict affecting both Muslim and Christian populations across the north.
- **Geopolitical Shift in the Sahel:** The strikes occur as the U.S. adapts to the loss of key counter-terrorism bases in Niger and Chad (2024). By launching missiles from maritime platforms in the Gulf of Guinea, the U.S. is demonstrating a "remote-reach" capability to contain jihadist expansion that threatens to merge Sahelian and Nigerian conflict zones.
- **Impact on Local Governance:** While the strikes caused no civilian casualties in Jabo village, they underscore the "ungoverned spaces" in northern Nigeria. Experts argue that while military action can disrupt militant enclaves, long-term stability requires addressing the 70% "governance deficit"—including poverty, lack of jobs, and failing local administrations.



## Key Definitions

- **Lakurawa:** Derived from the French *les recrues* (the recruits), it refers to a Salafi-jihadist group in NW Nigeria that initially acted as a community defense force before radicalizing and pledging allegiance to the Islamic State.



- **Country of Particular Concern (CPC):** A designation under the U.S. International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 for countries that engage in or tolerate "systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom."
- **ISSP (Islamic State Sahel Province):** An IS affiliate primarily active in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, which has increasingly sought to establish operational presence in Nigeria's border states.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 243 & 244 (UN Charter):** While not explicitly mentioned in the snippet, foreign military intervention usually requires either a UN Security Council mandate or "Consent of the Host State." Nigeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs invoked the latter to ensure the strikes are seen as legal.
- **The War Powers Act (U.S.):** Directs the U.S. President's ability to commit U.S. armed forces to hostiles or into situations where hostilities are imminent, requiring notification to Congress within 48 hours.
- **Leahy Law (U.S.):** Prohibits the U.S. Department of State and Department of Defense from providing military assistance to foreign security force units that violate human rights with impunity.
- **Article 1 of the Nigerian Constitution:** Establishes the supremacy of the Constitution; foreign military operations on Nigerian soil must align with the executive powers of the President as the Commander-in-Chief.

### Conclusion

The Christmas Day strikes represent a pivotal moment in Nigeria-U.S. relations, blending domestic religious narratives with hard-power counter-terrorism. While the precision of the strikes was high, the "guns-a-blazing" approach risks oversimplifying a socio-economic crisis as a purely religious one. For Nigeria, the challenge remains to reclaim its sovereign "ungoverned spaces" without becoming a permanent theater for foreign drone warfare, ensuring that military successes are followed by a "governance surge" in the marginalized northwest.

### UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** India's interests in West Africa; International relations and the impact of U.S. foreign policy on regional stability; Role of international law in foreign interventions.
- **General Studies III:** Internal Security; Linkages between development and spread of extremism; Transnational organized crime and terrorism; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating internal security challenges.
- **Key Themes:** The "Sahelization" of Nigerian conflicts, Religious Freedom vs. National Security in diplomacy, and the shift from land-based to maritime-based counter-terrorism platforms (Gulf of Guinea).

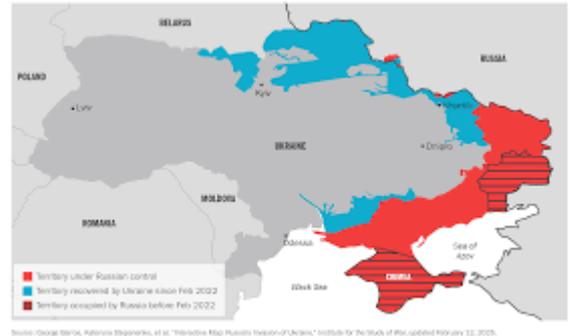
## 9. Strategic Realignment in the Ukraine Conflict: Putin's Territory Swap Proposal

- **Territorial Swap Initiative:** President Vladimir Putin has indicated a willingness to negotiate a "partial exchange of territories" currently held by Russian forces outside the Donbas region. This signal, delivered during a high-level meeting with Russia's business elite on December 24, 2025, marks a potential shift toward a transactional diplomatic settlement.
- **The Donbas Prerequisite:** Despite the openness to swaps elsewhere, the Kremlin maintains a non-negotiable demand for the entire Donbas region (Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts). This stance aligns



with the "Anchorage Principles" established during the August 2025 Trump-Putin Summit in Alaska, emphasizing that "Donbas is ours."

- **U.S.-Ukraine Peace Framework:** The proposal coincides with a nearly finalized "20-point peace plan" being negotiated between U.S. and Ukrainian delegations. While significant progress has been reported on security guarantees, the specific control of eastern territories and the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant remains the primary deadlock.
- **Energy and Infrastructure Diplomacy:** Beyond land, the negotiations involve complex arrangements for the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. Discussions include potential joint Russian-U.S. management and utilizing the facility's surplus power for regional crypto-mining and shared energy supply to Ukraine.
- **Domestic Economic Pressure:** The briefing to top businessmen suggests that the Kremlin is seeking "buy-in" from Russia's economic stakeholders. It reflects a strategic attempt to balance military objectives with the need to stabilize the economy and potentially ease long-term sanctions through a negotiated end to the war.
- **The Referendum Factor:** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has countered that any "painful territorial concessions" must be ratified by the Ukrainian people via a national referendum, contingent on a verifiable 60-day ceasefire to allow for a democratic process.



### Key Definitions

- **Donbas:** A shorthand for the "Donets Basin," a geologically and industrially significant region in eastern Ukraine comprising the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. It is the core of Ukraine's coal and steel industries.
- **Anchorage Agreements (2025):** The informal understandings reached during the Alaska Summit between U.S. President Trump and President Putin, which shifted the diplomatic focus from a temporary ceasefire to a permanent settlement based on territorial realities.
- **Territory Swap:** A diplomatic mechanism where conflicting parties exchange control over specific land parcels to reach a mutually acceptable border, often used to resolve stalemates where military victory is elusive.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (UN Charter):** Both nations have invoked the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense in response to the "Special Military Operation" and subsequent counter-offensives.
- **Article 73 of the Ukrainian Constitution:** Specifies that any issues regarding changes to the territory of Ukraine must be resolved exclusively by an All-Ukrainian referendum.
- **International Humanitarian Law (IHL):** Governing the occupation of territory, particularly regarding the status of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant and the safety of civilian energy infrastructure.
- **Budapest Memorandum (1994):** A frequent point of legal contention where Ukraine surrendered its nuclear arsenal in exchange for security assurances and the respect of its existing borders by Russia, the US, and the UK.



## Conclusion

The "territory swap" signal from Moscow represents a tactical move toward a "frozen conflict" or a settled peace on Russian terms. While it offers a glimmer of diplomatic flexibility, the insistence on the full annexation of Donbas directly clashes with Ukrainian constitutional requirements for territorial integrity. The evolving 20-point plan suggests a transition toward "realpolitik," where economic incentives and shared infrastructure management might eventually supersede absolute military victory.

## UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; International treaties and agreements (UN Charter, Budapest Memorandum).
- **General Studies III:** Security challenges and their management in border areas; Impact of global conflicts on energy security and crypto-economy.
- **Geography (Mapping):** Geographical significance of the Donbas, Sea of Azov, Kerch Strait, and the location of major nuclear facilities like Zaporizhzhia.

## 10. NIFTEM-K as Implementation Agency for PM VIKAS Scheme

- **Strategic MoU for Empowerment:** The National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM) Kundli has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Minority Affairs to serve as a Project Implementing Agency (PIA) for the flagship "PM VIKAS" scheme.
- **Targeted Skill Training:** NIFTEM-K will train 2110 beneficiaries from minority communities in specialized, demand-driven food industry roles: Multi-Skill Technician (Food Processing), Millet Products Processor, and Assistant Baking Technician.
- **Geographical and Social Reach:** The program will be executed across seven locations in four critical states—Jharkhand, Bihar, Punjab, and Haryana—focusing on integrating minority youth into the economic mainstream.
- **Standards and Certification:** All training modules are compliant with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF). Certifications will be issued by NCVET (National Council of Vocational Education and Training) and approved by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- **Livelihood and Market Linkages:** Beyond skilling, the project emphasizes "credit and market linkages" to ensure employment. The implementing agencies are tasked with facilitating placements in wage employment, self-employment, or apprenticeships, including roles in the organized sector.
- **Convergence Approach:** PM VIKAS is a Central Sector Scheme that converges five erstwhile initiatives (Seekho Aur Kamao, USTTAD, Hamari Dharohar, Nai Roshni, and Nai Manzil) into a unified framework for holistic development.

## Key Definitions

- **Project Implementing Agency (PIA):** An entity (government or non-government) authorized by the Ministry to execute specific project components, ensuring ground-level delivery of scheme benefits.
- **Central Sector Scheme:** A scheme 100% funded and implemented by the Central Government, as opposed to Centrally Sponsored Schemes where the cost is shared with States.



- **National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF):** A quality assurance framework that organizes qualifications according to a series of levels of knowledge, skills, and aptitude.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 29 & 30:** Protect the interests of minorities, including their right to establish and administer educational institutions and maintain their distinct culture.
- **Article 46 (DPSP):** Mandates the State to promote the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people.
- **National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992:** Provides the statutory framework for the identification and protection of the six notified minority communities (Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, and Parsis).

### Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The selection of an Institute of National Importance (INI) like NIFTEM-K to implement PM VIKAS underscores the government's shift toward high-quality, industry-aligned skilling for marginalized groups. By merging multiple siloed schemes into a unified "Virasat Ka Samvardhan" (PM VIKAS) model, the Ministry aims to reduce administrative overlap and enhance the scalability of livelihood programs.

**Relevance: \* GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; Functions of the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

- **GS Paper III:** Issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, and employment; Food processing and related industries in India.

## 11. Strengthening India's Pharmaceutical Sovereignty: IPC and the IP 2026 Milestone

- **Global Recognition and Trust:** The Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP) is now officially recognized as a standard book of reference in 19 countries (including Nicaragua, Afghanistan, and various nations in Africa and South Asia). This expansion reflects surging global confidence in India's regulatory frameworks and bolsters its reputation as the "Pharmacy of the World."
- **Launch of the 10th Edition:** The Union Health Minister is scheduled to release the 10th edition of the Indian Pharmacopoeia 2026 in early January 2026. This milestone edition will encompass over 3,340 monographs, including 121 new additions covering human vaccines, blood products, and biotechnology-derived therapeutics.
- **Pivot to Pharmacovigilance:** The Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) serves as the National Coordination Centre for the Pharmacovigilance Programme of India (PvPI). By monitoring Adverse Drug Reactions (ADRs) and building reporting capacity among healthcare professionals, IPC ensures that the lifecycle of a drug is monitored for safety post-market.
- **Strategic Harmonization:** IPC has recently joined the Pharmacopoeial Discussion Group (PDG), aligning Indian standards with the European, Japanese, and U.S. Pharmacopoeias. This harmonization reduces trade barriers for Indian pharmaceutical exports by ensuring that manufacturing standards meet global quality expectations.
- **Self-Reliance and Digitalization:** The Commission is driving the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" vision by strengthening indigenous scientific expertise. Future focuses include the digitalization of





pharmacopoeial standards and implementing AI-driven monitoring systems to ensure universal access to safe, quality-assured medicines.

- **Legal Authoritativeness:** Under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, the IP serves as the sole legal authority for drug standards in India. Any drug manufactured or sold in the country must comply with the "identity, purity, and strength" specifications prescribed in the current edition of the IP.

### Key Definitions

- **Pharmacopoeia:** An official publication containing a list of medicinal drugs with their effects and directions for their use, including mandatory standards for their identity and purity.
- **Monograph:** A specific, detailed entry in the Pharmacopoeia for a single drug or substance, outlining its chemical formula, tests for identity, and limits for impurities.
- **Pharmacovigilance:** The science and activities relating to the detection, assessment, understanding, and prevention of adverse effects or any other drug-related problems.
- **IP Reference Substances (IPRS):** Physical standards (highly purified samples) provided by the IPC to pharmaceutical labs to act as a "fingerprint" for identifying a drug and verifying its purity.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **The Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940:** This is the primary legislation governing the import, manufacture, distribution, and sale of drugs. The **Second Schedule** of this Act recognizes the Indian Pharmacopoeia as the official standard for drugs in India.
- **Article 47 (DPSP):** The Directive Principles of State Policy mandate the State to improve public health as its primary duty, which includes ensuring the safety and efficacy of medicines.
- **Rules 124 of the Drugs Rules, 1945:** Explicitly states that any drug included in the IP must comply with the standards prescribed in the current edition to be legally marketed.
- **Autonomous Status:** The IPC was established as an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare via an executive order (1956) and later restructured to enhance its scientific independence.

### Conclusion

The evolution of the Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission from a domestic standards-setter to a globally recognized scientific body is a testament to India's maturing healthcare ecosystem. The upcoming 10th edition (IP 2026) is not merely a technical update but a strategic tool for economic diplomacy, enabling Indian pharmaceutical firms to navigate global markets with greater credibility. However, the long-term success of these standards hinges on the robust implementation of pharmacovigilance at the grassroots level to protect patient safety.

### UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health; Role of statutory and autonomous bodies (IPC, CDSCO).
- **General Studies III:** Science and Technology—developments and their applications (Pharmacovigilance, Biotechnology); Economics (Pharmaceutical exports and Atmanirbhar Bharat).
- **Prelims Focus:** 19 countries recognizing IP, 10th Edition launch date, PvPI National Coordination Centre, and the PDG membership.