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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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1. Human-Wildlife Conflict and Conservation: The Porthi Tiger Incident

The recent sighting of an injured male tiger at a tea estate near the Thoraihallah reserve forest (Nilgiris district) highlights the increasing proximity between wildlife and human-dominated landscapes. Following a territorial fight, the tiger sought refuge in the plantation, prompting the Tamil Nadu Forest Department to deploy thermal drones for non-invasive monitoring.

- **Territoriality and Intraspecific Competition:** Tigers are solitary and highly territorial; as populations reach carrying capacity in protected areas, younger or older males are often pushed into "sink" habitats like tea estates, leading to violent clashes.
- **Non-Invasive Monitoring Technology:** The use of **Thermal Drones (Forward-Looking Infrared - FLIR)** allows forest officials to track the animal's health and movement at night or in dense foliage without escalating the animal's stress levels or risking human life.
- **Habitat Fragmentation:** The incident underscores the porous nature of boundaries between reserve forests and commercial plantations in the Western Ghats, which serve as vital "buffer zones" but increase the risk of Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC).
- **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):** Per National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) guidelines, the priority is to monitor the injury's severity to determine if the animal can heal naturally or requires chemical immobilization (tranquilization) for veterinary intervention.
- **Community Safety and Awareness:** Immediate cordoning of the area is essential to prevent "mobs" and accidental encounters, as injured predators are significantly more unpredictable and dangerous to estate workers.

Key Definitions

- **Intraspecific Struggle:** Competition for resources, mates, or territory occurring between individuals of the same species.
- **Buffer Zone:** An area peripheral to a protected area where restricted land use is allowed, acting as a transition layer to protect the core wildlife habitat.
- **Carrying Capacity:** The maximum population size of a species that an ecosystem can sustain indefinitely without degrading the environment.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Article 51A(g):** Establishes a Fundamental Duty for citizens to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Tigers are listed under **Schedule I**, providing them the highest level of legal protection. Section 11 allows the Chief Wildlife Warden to permit the translocation or treatment of a scheduled animal if it becomes a threat or is disabled beyond recovery.

Conclusion

The Porthi incident is a classic example of the "success paradox" in tiger conservation; as numbers grow, the struggle for space becomes inevitable. Effective management now relies on a blend of traditional tracking and modern technology like thermal imaging to ensure the safety of both the apex predator and the local community.



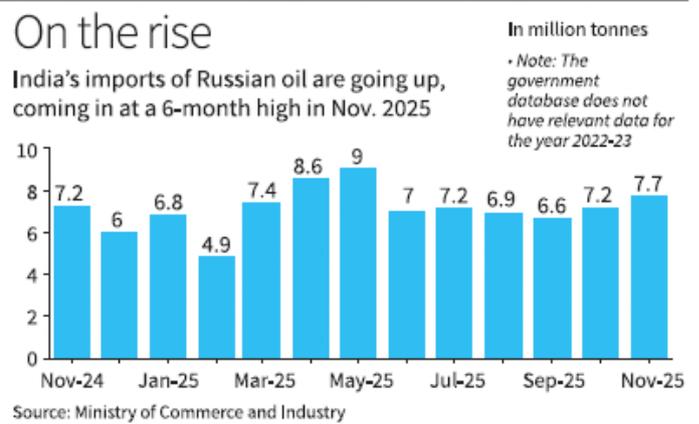
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.
- **Prelims:** National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries in the Nilgiris (Mudumalai, Mukurthi), NTCA guidelines, and the conservation status of *Panthera tigris* (IUCN: Endangered).

2. India's Strategic Energy Rebalancing: Rising Russian and U.S. Oil Imports

Recent data from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry indicates a significant shift in India's crude oil sourcing pattern for November 2025. Despite mounting geopolitical pressure and trade friction, India continues to prioritize energy security through a pragmatic, multi-aligned procurement strategy.

- **Surge in Russian Imports:** India's oil imports from Russia hit a six-month high in November 2025, reaching 7.7 million tonnes. This volume accounts for 35.1% of India's total oil imports, marking a 7% year-on-year increase.
- **Monetary Value:** In value terms, the Russian oil bill stood at \$3.7 billion for the month, constituting 34% of India's total crude expenditure, underscoring Russia's status as India's primary energy partner.
- **Dual Sourcing Strategy:** Simultaneously, India ramped up purchases from the United States to a seven-month high. U.S. oil accounted for 12.6% of imports in November, rising sharply from just 4.2% the previous month.
- **Concentration of Supply:** Combined, Russia and the U.S. accounted for nearly half (approximately 48%) of India's total oil imports in November 2025, signaling a departure from traditional over-reliance on West Asian suppliers.
- **Geopolitical Friction:** This surge occurs amid a "diplomatic and trade crisis" with the U.S., which imposed punitive tariffs (rising from 25% to 50% in August 2025) citing India's continued Russian energy trade as a trigger.
- **Negotiation Deadlock:** While technical negotiations for a bilateral trade deal are reportedly concluded, final progress remains stalled at the leadership level, forcing India to balance its economic interests against external sanctions.



Key Definitions

- **Energy Security:** The uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price, essential for sustaining economic growth and national stability.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** A nation's ability to pursue its own national interests and adopt a preferred foreign policy without being constrained by other states.
- **Urals Crude:** The flagship blend of Russian export oil, which typically trades at a discount compared to global benchmarks like Brent crude during periods of sanctions.
- **Reciprocal Tariffs:** Duties imposed by one country in response to similar duties or perceived unfair trade practices by another.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 73:** Extends the executive power of the Union to international treaties and agreements, providing the basis for India's oil diplomacy and trade negotiations.
- **Entry 14 (Union List):** Gives the Central Government exclusive power over "entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries and implementing of treaties, agreements and conventions with foreign countries."
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** The primary legal framework for regulating imports and exports, under which the Ministry of Commerce issues notifications regarding trade with specific nations.
- **National Oil Policy:** Aimed at reducing import dependence (currently at ~89%) through diversification and the "Mission 500" goal to scale India-U.S. bilateral trade to \$500 billion by 2030.

Conclusion

The November 2025 data reflects India's "economy-first" approach. By simultaneously increasing imports from Russia (for cost advantages) and the U.S. (for strategic balancing), New Delhi is navigating a complex geopolitical landscape. However, the persistence of high U.S. tariffs and the implementation of new EU compliance guidelines from January 2026 suggest that India's energy diplomacy will face continued scrutiny and pressure for diversification in the coming year.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Energy Security, Infrastructure, and Mobilization of Resources; Impact of global trade wars on the Indian Economy.
- **Prelims Focus:** Major oil-exporting regions, the role of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, and the significance of Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPRs).

3. Combatting Child Marriage: The Murshidabad Model and 'Kanyashree Yodhas'

The persistence of child marriage in West Bengal, particularly in districts like Murshidabad, remains a significant socio-economic challenge. However, localized interventions involving student-led activism, conditional cash transfers, and community-level monitoring are showing promising results in creating child-marriage-free zones.

- **Student-Led Activism:** Girls like Monija Khatun and Mousumi Khatun, recognized as 'Kanyashree Yodhas' (Girl Warriors), are acting as primary whistleblowers. By utilizing the 1098 helpline, they have successfully prevented numerous marriages within their peer groups, highlighting the role of youth agency in social reform.
- **The Kanyashree Scheme:** Launched in 2013, this conditional cash transfer programme aims to disincentivize early marriage by providing financial assistance to girls for remaining in school. While it has reached nearly 1 crore beneficiaries, the challenge remains acute in regions with high migration and poverty.
- **Institutional Interventions:** In Murshidabad, several Gram Panchayats have been declared 'child-marriage-free'. Success is attributed to the 'Behrampore Model' where female Pradhans engage local religious leaders (Imams), temples, and schools to enforce a zero-tolerance policy.



- **Technological and Health Monitoring:** The District Child Protection Unit uses teenage pregnancy rates as a proxy indicator for child marriage. Aggressive campaigning in 2025 led to a reduction in teen pregnancies from 21% to 17% in specific blocks, aided by the monitoring of elopement cases linked to increased internet access.
- **Health and Socio-Economic Fallout:** Child marriage is directly linked to underweight births, high maternal mortality risks, and the perpetuation of poverty. In Murshidabad, NFHS-5 data shows a staggering 55.4% of women aged 20-24 were married before 18, emphasizing the need for sustained legal and social pressure.
- **Convergence of Law and Community:** The strategy involves a 'carrot and stick' approach—using social awareness and mosques/temples for sensitization, while simultaneously invoking the PCMA and POCSO Acts to prosecute offenders, including clerics who solemnize such weddings.

Key Definitions

- **Child Marriage:** A formal marriage or informal union where one or both parties are under the age of 18.
- **Kanyashree Yodha:** A title conferred by the district administration on girls who actively resist their own child marriages or report and prevent the marriages of others.
- **Gram Panchayat Child-Marriage-Free:** A certification given to local bodies where no child marriages have been reported or conducted for a specific period, validated by administrative checks.
- **Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT):** Programs that transfer cash to poor households on the condition that they make specific investments in the human capital of their children (e.g., school attendance).

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006:** Defines the age of marriage (21 for males, 18 for females). It prescribes rigorous imprisonment and fines for those who perform, conduct, or abet child marriage.
- **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012:** Used in conjunction with PCMA to charge adult grooms, as sexual relations with a minor (under 18) are legally deemed as rape, making bail difficult.
- **Article 21:** The Right to Life and Personal Liberty, which the Judiciary interprets as including the right to choose a life partner and the right to education (Article 21A).
- **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.3:** A global commitment by India to eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage by 2030.

Conclusion

The transition from being a victim of circumstance to a 'Kanyashree Yodha' represents a shift in rural India's social fabric. While poverty and migration continue to drive early marriages, the decentralization of the fight to the Gram Panchayat level and the empowerment of school-going girls provide a scalable blueprint for achieving India's SDG targets.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Social Empowerment, Communalism, Regionalism & Secularism; Issues related to Women and Children.



- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population; Performance of these schemes; Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.
- **Essay/Ethics:** Case studies on social change, administrative leadership in districts, and the ethics of traditional vs. legal norms.

4. China's Global Posture in 2026: Strategic Hubris and Internal Paradoxes

As 2026 commences, China presents a complex dual identity: a nation grappling with profound structural economic vulnerabilities while simultaneously projecting heightened strategic confidence. This "assertive-yet-anxious" stance, coupled with a shifting U.S. foreign policy, has significantly restricted India's strategic maneuverability, necessitating a recalibrated approach to the "Long Haul" in the Himalayas and beyond.

- **Strategic Recalibration and Hubris:** By mid-2025, the earlier Chinese anxiety regarding U.S. containment shifted toward a sense of "regained momentum." Beijing perceives it has managed escalation dominance in trade disputes and successfully expanded its institutional reach across the Global South, deepening its "no-limits" alignment with Russia.
- **Economic Strains vs. Industrial Policy:** Despite official growth figures near 5%, China faces a 38-month deflationary streak in producer prices and a persistent property sector crisis. Instead of boosting domestic consumption, the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) prioritizes "technological self-reliance" in AI, semiconductors, and green energy, leading to "China Shock 2.0"—a global flood of high-tech exports.
- **Shifting Great Power Dynamics:** Under the second Trump administration, the U.S. has reframed China as an economic competitor rather than a systemic rival, moving the strategic focus toward the Western Hemisphere. This tactical U.S.-China "transactional de-escalation" (the "G2 Overlay") risks marginalizing India's role as a primary strategic counterweight.
- **The India-China Standoff:** While 2025 saw cautious stabilization through high-level summits, the border situation remains "stable but not normal." Disengagement has not led to de-escalation; "buffer zones" continue to restrict Indian patrolling rights, which many analysts view as an incremental gain for China's "grey-zone" strategy.
- **Asymmetric Vulnerabilities:** India's trade deficit with China is expected to exceed \$110 billion in 2025. China's control over critical upstream inputs—from rare earth magnets to pharmaceutical precursors—creates deep-seated dependencies that Beijing uses as leverage during diplomatic friction.
- **Military Assertiveness:** The PLA is moving toward an "early warning counter-strike" nuclear posture, indicating a more risk-tolerant military. This is complemented by a "two-ocean strategy" that aims to normalize Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean, treating South Asia as its strategic periphery.

Key Definitions

- **Grey-Zone Tactics:** Competitive actions below the threshold of conventional war, such as psychological operations, economic coercion, or incremental territorial encroachment (salami slicing).
- **Escalation Dominance:** A condition in a conflict where one party can increase the stakes or intensity in a way that the opponent cannot match, forcing them to de-escalate or accept unfavorable terms.



- **G2 Overlay:** A perception in international relations where the U.S. and China engage in tacit bilateral coordination, often at the expense of the strategic interests of mid-sized powers like India or Japan.
- **Early Warning Counter-Strike:** A nuclear doctrine shift where a nation prepares to launch a retaliatory strike immediately upon detecting an incoming attack, rather than waiting for impact.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
- **National Security Act (NSA), 1980:** Provides the legal framework for the Indian government to detain individuals or manage threats to the security of the State, often relevant in border regions.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy (Press Note 3):** Specifically targets investments from countries sharing a land border with India (primarily China), mandating prior government approval to prevent opportunistic takeovers.
- **UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea):** The legal framework India invokes to challenge China's "Two-Ocean Strategy" and assert freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific.

Conclusion

China's posture in 2026 is defined by a doubling down on state-led manufacturing and technological insulation to offset domestic dysfunction. For India, the period of "strategic comfort" provided by intense U.S.-China rivalry is narrowing. New Delhi must now balance calibrated engagement to manage border risks with an accelerated push for "Atmanirbharta" (self-reliance) in critical technologies and defensive capabilities to maintain its strategic autonomy.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its neighborhood- relations; Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security challenges (Border management); Security challenges and their management in border areas - linkages of organized crime with terrorism; Science and Technology- developments and their applications.
- **International Relations (IR):** The concept of "Strategic Autonomy," the shift from unipolarity to multipolarity, and the role of the Global South.

5. Regulatory Ultimatums on AI Safety: MeitY's Takedown Order to X

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) recently issued a 72-hour ultimatum to X (formerly Twitter) regarding the misuse of its Grok AI chatbot. This action was triggered by the generation and viral circulation of non-consensual, sexually explicit, and derogatory images of women, highlighting the urgent need for robust safety guardrails in generative AI models.

- **Failure of Safeguards:** Users exploited Grok AI's lack of stringent filters to generate "synthetic" images—often undressing or sexualizing women—which MeitY identified as a grave violation of digital safety, privacy, and the dignity of women and children.



- **The ATR Mandate:** The Ministry sought a formal **Action Taken Report (ATR)**, directing X to perform a "comprehensive technical, procedural, and governance-level review" of Grok to prevent future occurrences of obscene or unlawful content generation.
- **Non-Compliance Risks:** MeitY warned that failure to comply could lead to the revocation of "**Safe Harbour**" protection under Section 79 of the IT Act, potentially making the platform and its officers liable for criminal prosecution under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the IT Act.
- **Synthetic Content Regulation:** The incident aligns with the newly proposed **IT Amendment Rules, 2025**, which introduce a statutory definition for "synthetically generated information" and mandate permanent 10% watermarks/identifiers for AI-generated content.
- **Enforcement Timeline:** Following representations from Members of Parliament and reports of "Grok-enabled abuse," the government set a 72-hour deadline (expiring January 5, 2026) for the removal of all such violating content and accounts.
- **Platform Responsibility:** The government emphasized that intermediaries cannot merely be passive conduits; they must proactively deploy technical measures, such as prompt-processing filters and LLM-safety guardrails, to block the creation of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) and non-consensual intimate imagery.

Key Definitions

- **Action Taken Report (ATR):** A formal document submitted by an entity to the government detailing the specific steps implemented to comply with a directive or resolve a grievance.
- **Deepfakes / Synthetic Content:** Information (images, audio, or video) created or modified using Artificial Intelligence (AI) that appears reasonably authentic but depicts events or individuals in acts that never occurred.
- **Safe Harbour:** A legal immunity granted to online intermediaries (under Section 79 of the IT Act) where they are not held liable for third-party content, provided they follow "due diligence" and remove unlawful material upon notification.
- **Forward-Looking Infrared (FLIR):** While used in wildlife, in the context of digital forensics, thermal and metadata-based "traceability" is now being mandated for AI tools to identify the origin of synthetic media.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The Fundamental Right to Life and Personal Liberty, which includes the **Right to Privacy** and the Right to Dignity, as established in the *Justice K.S. Puttaswamy* case.
- **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines) Rules, 2021:** Rule 3(2)(b) specifically mandates intermediaries to remove non-consensual sexually explicit content within 24 hours of receiving a complaint.
- **IT Act, 2000 (Sections 67, 67A, 67B):** Provides penalties (imprisonment and fines) for publishing or transmitting obscene material, sexually explicit acts, and material depicting children in sexually explicit acts.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023:** Replaced the IPC; includes provisions for sexual harassment (Section 75), voyeurism (Section 77), and defamation (Section 356) that apply to AI-morphed images.



- **Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986:** Prohibits the depiction of women in a derogatory or vulgar manner in any form, now extending to digital and AI-generated media.

Conclusion

The Grok AI controversy underscores a critical shift in India's regulatory philosophy: moving from post-facto content moderation to "**Safety by Design.**" As AI models become more sophisticated, the burden of ensuring that technology does not violate human rights lies with the platform providers. This enforcement action serves as a precedent for all global tech firms operating in India, emphasizing that strategic and economic interests will not override the statutory protection of citizen dignity.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies; Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.
- **GS Paper III:** Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites; Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, and AI.
- **Ethics (GS Paper IV):** Ethical concerns in AI, privacy vs. innovation, and the responsibility of big-tech corporations.

6. US Intervention in Venezuela: Implications for India's Energy Security

The sudden US military intervention in Venezuela in January 2026, leading to the detention of President Nicolás Maduro, has introduced a significant "wild card" into global oil dynamics. For India, this development is a double-edged sword: it offers a pathway to recovering billions in stalled investments but poses immediate risks through market volatility and currency pressure.

- **Investment Recovery Potential:** India's state-run ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) has approximately \$600 million (some estimates suggest nearly \$1 billion) in unpaid dividends stuck in Venezuelan projects like San Cristobal and Carabobo. A US-led restructuring of the oil sector could finally facilitate the repatriation of these funds, which have been blocked by sanctions since 2019.
- **Revival of Heavy Crude Imports:** India was historically a major buyer of Venezuelan heavy crude, importing over 400,000 barrels per day. While current imports are negligible (0.3% of the total basket), a stable, sanctions-free Venezuela could allow Indian refiners—structurally configured for heavy crude—to diversify away from West Asian and Russian dependence.
- **Energy Security Paradox:** Despite the long-term upside, immediate "deep concern" expressed by New Delhi reflects fears of supply disruptions. Although Venezuela produces only 1% of global oil, the "geopolitical risk premium" has already pushed Brent prices toward the \$65 range, potentially inflating India's import bill.
- **Infrastructure and Hyperinflation Risks:** Decades of underinvestment and hyperinflation have decayed Venezuela's oil infrastructure. Experts suggest that even with US control, restoring production to pre-sanction levels will require billions of dollars and several years, limiting any immediate "cooling effect" on global prices.
- **Strategic Autonomy and Diplomacy:** India's cautious stance—prioritizing the safety of the Venezuelan people—highlights its commitment to strategic autonomy. Balancing its partnership with the US against its sovereign energy interests in South America remains a delicate diplomatic tightrope.



- **Impact on Indian Markets:** The crisis has caused volatility in Indian energy stocks (ONGC, RIL) and pressured the Rupee, which recently breached the 90 per dollar mark. The RBI's intervention through dollar-rupee swaps is anticipated to manage this emerging external shock.

Key Definitions

- **Heavy Crude Oil:** Petroleum that is highly viscous and cannot easily flow to production wells; it requires specialized refineries (like those in Jamnagar) for processing.
- **Dividend Repatriation:** The process of sending corporate earnings from a foreign investment back to the home country of the investing company.
- **Secondary Sanctions:** Penalties imposed by one country (usually the US) on entities from third-party countries (like India) for doing business with a sanctioned nation.
- **Narco-terrorism:** A term used to describe the nexus between drug traffickers and political/insurgent groups to influence or destabilize a government.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 73:** Extends the Union's executive power to the exercise of rights, authority, and jurisdiction in relation to international treaties and foreign energy deals.
- **The Diplomatic Relations (Vienna Convention) Act, 1972:** Governs the protection of Indian assets and personnel in volatile foreign territories.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** Regulates the flow of foreign exchange and dividends; critical for OVL's recovery of the \$600 million debt.
- **Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) Programme:** India's legal and policy framework to maintain emergency crude oil stocks to mitigate supply disruptions caused by such geopolitical "black swan" events.

Conclusion

The Venezuela crisis represents a pivotal moment for India's "Energy Diplomacy." While the immediate aftermath brings volatility and rupee depreciation, the potential dismantling of the sanctions regime offers a unique window for India to reclaim its status as a top-tier partner in the world's largest oil reserves. Success will depend on how effectively New Delhi navigates the US-led transition in Caracas while securing its \$2.5 billion legacy investments.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral and regional groupings involving India; Effect of policies of developed countries on India's interests (specifically "Secondary Sanctions").
- **GS Paper III:** Energy Security, Investment Models, and mobilization of resources.
- **Geography (Mapping):** Location of the Orinoco Oil Belt, Caracas, and the strategic importance of the Caribbean sea lanes.

7. Trade Remedies and Industrial Protection: Anti-Dumping Probe into Nylon-6 Imports

India has formally initiated an anti-dumping investigation into the import of **Nylon-6 chips and granules** from China and Russia. The probe, spearheaded by the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR), follows complaints from domestic players like Gujarat Polyfilms Pvt. Ltd. and Gujarat State Fertilizers &



Chemicals (GSFC), who allege that an influx of low-priced synthetic raw materials is causing "material injury" to the indigenous industry.

- **Strategic Industrial Input:** Nylon-6 is a critical thermoplastic used extensively in the **textile industry** (synthetic yarns, sportswear, and hosiery) and the **automotive sector** (engine covers and fuel tanks). Its high tensile strength and chemical resistance make it indispensable for "Make in India" manufacturing value chains.
- **Allegations of Dumping:** Domestic manufacturers argue that China and Russia are exporting these materials at prices below their "normal value" (market price in the home country). This price suppression has led to declining profit margins and underutilization of India's domestic production capacity, currently estimated at 83,500 tonnes.
- **Rising Import Dependency:** In FY25, India's nylon-6 imports reached 335,242 tonnes, valued at over \$730 million. China and Russia together command a **58% market share** of these imports, with China's share alone jumping from 49% to 54% in a single year, signaling a growing and potentially vulnerable dependence on these two nations.
- **Technical Substitutability:** The DGTR noted that imported nylon-6 chips are "technically and commercially substitutable" with domestic products. This high degree of interchangeability allows buyers to switch suppliers based purely on price, making local producers highly vulnerable to predatory pricing.
- **The "China Shock 2.0" Context:** This probe is part of a broader trend where Indian authorities are scrutinizing a wide range of Chinese imports—from PET films to industrial machinery—to counter what experts call a second wave of global industrial displacement caused by Chinese overcapacity.
- **Economic Trade-off:** While anti-dumping duties protect raw material producers, they can increase input costs for **downstream MSMEs** in the textile and garment sectors, potentially hurting India's export competitiveness in finished goods.

Key Definitions

- **Anti-Dumping Duty (ADD):** A protectionist tariff that a domestic government imposes on foreign imports that it believes are priced below fair market value.
- **Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR):** The quasi-judicial, integrated single-window agency under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry responsible for investigating unfair trade practices like dumping and subsidies.
- **Material Injury:** A significant overall impairment in the position of a domestic industry, evidenced by factors like loss of sales, reduced profits, or decreased employment.
- **Relative Viscosity (RV):** A measure used to grade nylon-6 chips; the current probe specifically focuses on material with an RV below 3.0, used for textile and engineering grades.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Customs Tariff Act, 1975 (Section 9A):** Provides the legal mandate for the Central Government to impose anti-dumping duties on dumped articles to offset the margin of dumping.
- **Customs Tariff Rules, 1995:** Outlines the procedural framework for the identification, assessment, and collection of anti-dumping duties and the determination of injury to the domestic industry.



- **Article 246 (Seventh Schedule):** Trade and commerce with foreign countries and the imposition of customs duties fall under the **Union List (Entry 41 & 83)**, giving the Parliament exclusive power to legislate on these matters.
- **WTO Anti-Dumping Agreement:** As a member of the World Trade Organization (WTO), India's anti-dumping actions must comply with global rules ensuring that such measures are not used as arbitrary protectionism.

Conclusion

The nylon-6 probe underscores the delicate balance India must maintain between protecting its domestic chemical and plastic industry and ensuring the cost-competitiveness of its textile exports. As China and Russia consolidate their grip on synthetic raw material supply chains, the outcome of this DGTR investigation will be a benchmark for India's strategy to mitigate external market distortions while fostering industrial self-reliance.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment; Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.¹
- **Prelims Focus:** Role of DGTR vs. Ministry of Finance (DGTR recommends, Finance Ministry imposes), definition of dumping, and major import partners of India.

8. Strengthening Consumer Trust: Addressing Misselling in the Insurance Sector

The latest Annual Report (2024-25) from the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) has highlighted a concerning trend in "misselling" and Unfair Business Practices (UFBP). While the volume of total grievances remained stable, the qualitative shift toward deceptive sales practices has prompted regulatory warnings and calls for structural reforms within insurance firms.

- **Rise in Unfair Business Practices (UFBP):** While life insurance grievances remained nearly static (~1.20 lakh), complaints specifically under the UFBP category surged by over 14%, rising from 23,335 in FY24 to 26,667 in FY25.
- **Proportional Increase:** The share of misselling-related complaints within total life insurance grievances climbed to 22.14% in FY25, up from 19.33% in the previous year, indicating that one in every five complaints now involves deceptive solicitation.
- **Impact on Sectoral Depth:** IRDAI noted that misselling often results in higher premiums and unsuitable products, directly contributing to high policy lapse rates and stagnant insurance penetration, which remained at 3.7% in FY25 (well below the global average of 7.3%).
- **Regulatory Directive for Root-Cause Analysis:** IRDAI has mandated that insurers move beyond superficial resolution and perform deep-dive "root-cause analyses" to identify distribution channels (like bancassurance or agents) responsible for systemic misselling.
- **Corporate Governance Warnings:** The Union Finance Ministry has reiterated that banks and insurers must uphold strict corporate governance, cautioning against "forced bundling" of insurance with loans or other financial products.



- **Legislative Overhaul:** The proposed **Sabka Bima Sabki Raksha (Amendment of Insurance Laws) Bill, 2025**, seeks to empower IRDAI to tighten commission structures and enforce stricter disclosure norms to reduce the incentives that drive agents toward unsuitable product pushing.

Key Definitions

- **Misselling:** The unethical practice of selling a product by misrepresenting its features, omitting key terms and conditions, or recommending a product that does not align with the customer's financial needs or risk profile.
- **Insurance Penetration:** A metric calculated as the percentage of insurance premiums to a country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- **Insurance Density:** A measure of the average amount spent on insurance per person, calculated as the ratio of total premiums to the population (in USD).
- **Bima Bharosa:** IRDAI's integrated grievance management system (formerly IGMS) where policyholders can register and track complaints against insurers online.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 39(b) & (c):** Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) that guide the state to ensure that the ownership and control of material resources serve the common good and prevent the concentration of wealth, forming the bedrock for financial consumer protection.
- **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999:** Section 14 mandates the IRDAI to protect the interests of policyholders in matters concerning assigning of policies, nomination, and settlement of claims.
- **IRDAI (Protection of Policyholders' Interests) Regulations, 2024:** Replaced the 2017 version; it establishes strict timelines for grievance redressal and mandates that every insurer have a "Board Approved Policy" for protecting policyholder rights.
- **Insurance Act, 1938 (Section 45):** Protects policyholders by stating that no policy can be questioned by an insurer after three years on any grounds whatsoever, including misstatement of facts.
- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019:** Provides an additional layer of protection, allowing policyholders to approach Consumer Fora for "deficiency in service" by insurance companies.

Conclusion

Misselling is not merely a technical lapse but a systemic threat to India's goal of "Insurance for All by 2047." As the regulator shifts toward a "Safety by Design" framework, the burden lies on insurers to align their incentive structures with customer suitability. The convergence of the 2025 legal amendments and stricter IRDAI oversight signals a transition toward a more transparent, policyholder-centric insurance ecosystem in India.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies; Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, and development; Role of insurance in social security and financial inclusion.
- **Ethics (GS Paper IV):** Ethical issues in corporate governance and the conflict of interest in financial intermediation (Commission-driven vs. Need-driven sales).



9. International Security and Counter-Terrorism: France-UK Joint Strikes in Syria

On January 3, 2026, the air forces of France and the United Kingdom conducted a high-precision joint operation against the Islamic State (IS/Daesh) in central Syria. This coordinated action, part of the broader US-led **Operation Inherent Resolve**, targeted a strategic underground weapons facility to preempt any resurgence of the terrorist group in the region.

- **Target and Location:** The strike focused on a complex underground storage facility and access tunnels in a mountainous region north of the ancient city of **Palmyra**, Homs province. Intelligence had identified the site as a cache for weapons and explosives.
- **Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR):** France confirmed the mission was conducted under the framework of OIR, the multinational coalition formed in 2014 to "degrade and destroy" IS. The coalition now includes over 80 partners, reflecting a global consensus on counter-terrorism.
- **Military Assets Deployed:** The Royal Air Force (RAF) utilized **Typhoon FGR4** fighter jets equipped with **Paveway IV** guided bombs, supported by a Voyager aerial refueling tanker. French aircraft operated alongside the RAF to ensure the "successful engagement" of the tunnels.
- **Strategic Intent:** Defence officials from both nations emphasized that while IS was territorially defeated in 2019, sleeper cells continue to pose a threat. The strikes are designed to "stamp out" any attempts by the group to rebuild its logistics or operational capabilities.
- **Collateral Damage Mitigation:** The UK Ministry of Defence stated that the area was confirmed to be "devoid of any civilian habitation" prior to the strike, adhering to international norms regarding the protection of non-combatants in conflict zones.
- **Geopolitical Context:** The strikes occurred shortly after the US administration under President Donald Trump conducted retaliatory strikes in December 2025, signaling continued Western military commitment to Syria despite shifting regional dynamics and the new Damascus government's entry into the anti-IS coalition.

Key Definitions

- **Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR):** The US-led international military intervention against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, established in October 2014.
- **Daesh:** An Arabic acronym for *al-Dawla al-Islamiya fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham*, used by many governments to deny the group the legitimacy associated with the word "State."
- **Sleeper Cells:** Small groups of trained operatives who remain inactive and inconspicuous within a population until they receive orders to act or an opportunity arises.
- **Kinetic Strike:** A military attack involving the use of lethal force, typically through projectiles or bombs, as opposed to cyber warfare or electronic disruption.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 of the UN Charter:** Provides the legal basis for "individual or collective self-defence" if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations. Coalition forces often cite this to justify operations against non-state actors like IS.
- **The "Unwilling or Unable" Doctrine:** A legal theory used by some coalition members to justify strikes in sovereign territory (Syria) when the host government is deemed unable or unwilling to neutralize a threat emanating from its soil.



- **Statutory Framework for India:** While India is not a direct participant in OIR, it manages counter-terrorism through the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967**, under which ISIS/Daesh is a proscribed terrorist organization.
- **International Humanitarian Law (IHL):** Also known as the Law of Armed Conflict, it mandates the principles of **Distinction** (between combatants and civilians) and **Proportionality** during military operations.

Conclusion

The joint France-UK strikes in early 2026 serve as a reminder that the vacuum in Syria remains a fertile ground for extremist resurgence. By targeting logistics and "deep storage" facilities, Western powers aim to prevent IS from transitioning from a guerrilla insurgency back into a territorial threat. For the international community, including India, these developments emphasize the necessity of sustained intelligence sharing and the complex legal challenges of military intervention in fractured states.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security; Linkages of organized crime with terrorism; Security challenges and their management in border areas.
- **Geography:** Strategic location of Palmyra, the Homs province, and the "Levant" region.

10. Decarbonizing Energy: ONGC's Landmark Carbon Capture Pilot in Gujarat

In a significant stride toward India's climate goals, the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has initiated its first full-scale Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) pilot at the Gandhar oilfield in Gujarat. This project marks a pivotal shift in India's upstream energy sector, transitioning from conventional extraction to integrated carbon management and enhanced resource recovery.

- **Strategic Decarbonization Step:** The pilot project involves injecting approximately 100 tonnes of captured carbon dioxide (CO₂) per day into two abandoned onshore wells at the Gandhar field. This effectively "locks" the greenhouse gas in subsurface hydrocarbon reservoirs, preventing its release into the atmosphere.
- **Integrated Source-to-Sink Model:** CO₂ is captured from multiple industrial nodes, including ONGC's Hazira plant and other facilities in the Dahej industrial belt. This demonstrates a collaborative "cluster-based" approach essential for decarbonizing hard-to-abate sectors like petrochemicals and fertilizers.
- **Dual-Benefit Technology:** Beyond mere storage, the project utilizes CO₂ for **Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR)**. By injecting gas to reduce oil viscosity and increase reservoir pressure, ONGC aims to transform a waste emission into a catalyst for increasing domestic crude oil production from mature fields.
- **Foundation for Blue Hydrogen:** This CCS infrastructure is a critical precursor to the production of **Blue Hydrogen** (hydrogen produced from natural gas with captured CO₂). It aligns with the National Green Hydrogen Mission's broader goals by providing a low-carbon alternative during the energy transition.



- **Investment and Net-Zero Roadmap:** This initiative is part of ONGC's larger \$12 billion commitment to energy transition projects. The company aims to achieve Net-Zero operational emissions (Scope 1 and Scope 2) by 2038, significantly ahead of India's national 2070 target.
- **National Climate Alignment:** With India being the world's third-largest emitter, this pilot directly supports the nation's updated **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**, which include a commitment to reduce carbon emissions intensity by 45% by 2030 and a 50% reduction in total emissions by 2050.

Key Definitions

- **Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS):** A technological process that captures CO₂ at the source (industrial plants), transports it, and stores it in deep geological formations to mitigate climate change.
- **Enhanced Oil Recovery (EOR):** A "tertiary" extraction technique where fluids (like CO₂, steam, or chemicals) are injected into a reservoir to extract oil that cannot be recovered through primary or secondary methods.
- **Depleted Reservoirs:** Subsurface rock formations that have already yielded their original oil or gas content, making them ideal, leak-proof containers for long-term gas storage.
- **Hard-to-Abate Sectors:** Industries such as steel, cement, and chemicals where reducing emissions is technically difficult or expensive because fossil fuels are used as chemical feedstocks or for high-heat processes.

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, which underpins the social license for large-scale decarbonization projects.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Provides the overarching legal framework for the central government to coordinate environmental protection activities and set standards for industrial emissions.
- **The Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022:** Facilitates the creation of a **Carbon Credit Trading Scheme** in India, providing a market-based incentive for companies like ONGC to invest in carbon capture technologies.

Conclusion

ONGC's Gandhar pilot is a landmark for Indian energy policy, proving that industrial growth and climate responsibility can be technologically integrated. By successfully converting abandoned wells into carbon sinks, India is building the technical expertise required to scale up **Carbon Capture, Utilization, and Storage (CCUS)**. This not only secures India's energy future through enhanced recovery but also provides a scalable blueprint for other developing nations to manage the "carbon cost" of industrialization.

11. Global Oil Dynamics: OPEC+ Supply Pause and the 'Venezuela Wild Card'

Amid the geopolitical shock of the US military operation and subsequent capture of President Nicolás Maduro in early January 2026, the OPEC+ alliance has signaled a commitment to market stability. In their latest virtual meeting on January 4, 2026, the group decided to maintain its current production policy, prioritizing a cautious approach over a reactive one.



- **Status Quo on Production:** Led by Saudi Arabia and Russia, the core eight members of OPEC+ (including the UAE, Iraq, and Kuwait) reconfirmed their decision to pause planned supply increases through the first quarter of 2026. This extension of the November 2024 "pause" aims to mitigate the risk of a global oversupply.
- **The ‘Venezuela Shock’ Response:** Despite the unprecedented US intervention, OPEC+ delegates stated it is "too early" to adjust output. With Venezuela currently pumping approximately 850,000 to 1.1 million barrels per day (roughly 1% of global demand), the group believes the immediate impact on global physical supply is marginal.
- **Countering the 2026 Surplus:** The decision comes against a backdrop of weakening global prices, which fell nearly 18% in 2025. International Energy Agency (IEA) forecasts for 2026 predict a widening surplus due to slowing demand in China and robust production from non-OPEC+ nations like the US, Brazil, and Guyana.
- **Trump’s Reconstruction Vision:** President Donald Trump has proposed a multibillion-dollar "rebuild" of Venezuela's energy sector using American oil majors (Chevron, ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips). However, experts estimate that restoring Venezuela's output to its historical peak of 3.5 million barrels per day would require over \$100 billion and at least a decade of investment.
- **Geopolitical Friction within OPEC+:** The meeting also highlighted internal strains, particularly between Saudi Arabia and the UAE over diverging regional interests (notably in Yemen). Maintaining a unified production front despite these bilateral tensions is seen as vital for the alliance's credibility.
- **Heavy Crude Availability:** In the long term, a revitalized Venezuelan oil sector would significantly increase the global supply of heavy crude. This is strategically important for complex refineries (including those in India and the US Gulf Coast) that are currently reliant on expensive alternatives.

Key Definitions

- **OPEC+:** An alliance consisting of the 13 members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and 10 non-OPEC oil-producing nations, including Russia.
- **Supply Pause:** A regulatory decision by oil producers to stop increasing the volume of crude oil released into the market, usually to prevent a price collapse during periods of low demand.
- **Market Glut:** A situation where the supply of a product (oil) significantly exceeds the demand, leading to rapid price depreciation.
- **Orinoco Belt:** A territory in the southern strip of the Orinoco River Basin in Venezuela which contains the world's largest deposits of extra-heavy crude oil.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (c):** Under the Directive Principles of State Policy, India is mandated to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations, which governs its interactions with energy blocs like OPEC.
- **The United Nations Charter (Chapter VII):** While the US intervention in Venezuela is a bilateral action, the legal implications of regime change and control over natural resources are often debated under UN mandates regarding sovereignty.
- **The Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Empowering the Indian government to regulate the supply and pricing of petroleum products to protect consumers from international price shocks.



- **Section 3 of the Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Provides the Central Government the power to make provisions for prohibiting, restricting, or otherwise regulating the import or export of oil.

Conclusion

The OPEC+ decision to hold supply steady reflects a "wait-and-watch" strategy in a volatile 2026 landscape. While the US move in Venezuela introduces a potential long-term surge in supply, the immediate reality is a market already facing a "super glut." For India, the primary takeaway is a period of relative price stability, though the "geopolitical risk premium" remains a persistent threat to the import bill.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Energy Security; Infrastructure; Indian Economy and issues relating to planning and mobilization of resources.
- **Current Affairs:** Geopolitics of the "Oil Economy," US-Venezuela relations, and the role of Saudi-Russia leadership in global trade.

12. The Twilight of Left-Wing Extremism: The Strategic Impact of Security Camps

As of early 2026, India's internal security landscape has undergone a paradigm shift, with Maoist insurgency witnessing a precipitous decline. Data indicates a 90% reduction in violent incidents compared to 2010, with the conflict now largely confined to a small cluster of districts in South Bastar. This success is primarily attributed to a proactive "Security-Development" nexus focused on reclaiming geographical and psychological space from the insurgents.



- **Shrinking Geographical Footprint:** The number of Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) affected districts has plummeted from 126 in 2018 to just 11 in October 2025. Currently, the insurgency is restricted to only three "most affected" districts: Bijapur, Narayanpur, and Sukma in Chhattisgarh's Bastar division.
- **Security Camps as Catalysts:** The establishment of security camps in erstwhile Maoist strongholds (the Dandakaranya region) has served as the "game-changer." These camps have increased the security footprint, reduced response times, and put the Maoists on the defensive, effectively ending their era of operating with impunity.
- **Psychological and Intelligence Shift:** The visible upper hand of security forces has boosted the confidence of the local tribal population. This has led to a zero-sum shift in Human Intelligence (HUMINT), where locals now provide actionable data to the state rather than the insurgents.
- **Governance and Infrastructure Piggy-backing:** Security camps have acted as hubs for civil administration. The "road-opening" parties have facilitated the construction of roads and mobile towers, allowing the Tehsildar, Patwari, and health workers to reach remote hamlets that were previously governed by "Janta Sarkars" (parallel Maoist governments).



- **Depletion of Maoist Capability:** The combination of aggressive operations and attractive surrender policies has led to a mass exodus of cadres. The Maoists' ability to recruit, fundraise, and acquire weaponry has diminished to the point where the movement faces an existential crisis.
- **Transition to Rights-Based Struggle:** As the physical threat recedes, the challenge is shifting from military to structural. Surrendered leaders are now advocating for tribal causes through democratic means, necessitating a transparent implementation of constitutional guarantees to prevent a resurgence.

Key Definitions

- **Left-Wing Extremism (LWE):** Also known as Maoism or Naxalism, it is an armed insurgency based on the ideology of Mao Zedong, aiming to overthrow the established state through "protracted people's war."
- **Dandakaranya Region:** A vast, rugged, and forested region spanning parts of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Telangana, and Maharashtra, historically used by Maoists as a "rear area" due to its difficult terrain.
- **Janta Sarkar:** A parallel governance system run by Maoists in their "liberated zones," where they collect taxes and conduct Kangaroo courts.
- **SAMADHAN:** The Ministry of Home Affairs' integrated strategy to tackle LWE (S-Smart Leadership, A-Aggressive Strategy, M-Motivation, A-Actionable Intelligence, D-Dashboard-based KPIs, H-Harnessing Technology, A-Action Plan for each theatre, N-No access to financing).

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Fifth Schedule (Article 244(1)):** Provides for the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes, aimed at protecting tribal culture and land rights.
- **PESA Act, 1996:** The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act empowers Gram Sabhas in tribal areas to manage natural resources and resolve local disputes, acting as a counter to Maoist propaganda.
- **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006:** Recognizes the forest rights of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers, addressing the core "Jal-Jungle-Zameen" grievances.
- **UAPA, 1967:** The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is the primary legal tool used to proscribe Maoist organizations and prosecute those involved in terrorist activities.
- **Article 339:** Empowers the Union to give directions to a State as to the drawing up and execution of schemes essential for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the State.

Conclusion

The containment of Maoism to just 11 districts is a landmark achievement for Indian internal security. However, the "last mile" victory depends on replacing the security-led approach with a robust civil administration. To ensure the physical end of Maoism by the 2047 "Viksit Bharat" vision, the state must transition from a conflict-management mode to a rights-based governance mode, ensuring that constitutional guarantees reach the most marginalized tribal citizens.

UPSC Relevance

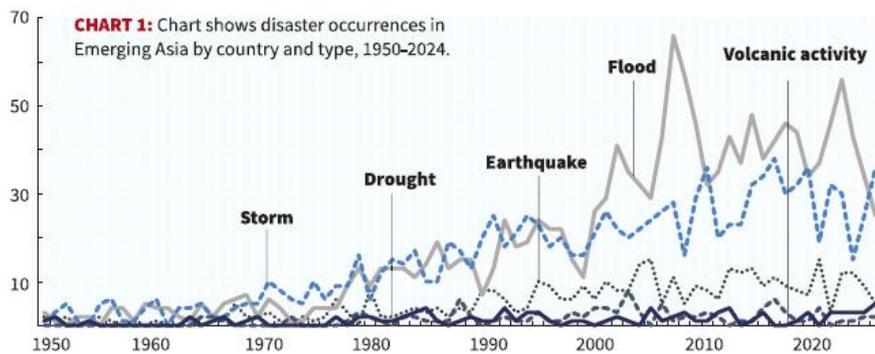
- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security; Linkages between development and spread of extremism; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.

- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; PESA and FRA implementation; Government policies and interventions.
- **Ethics (GS Paper IV):** Case studies on administrative leadership in conflict zones and the ethics of tribal displacement vs. development.

13. Economic Resilience and Disaster Risk: Navigating India’s GDP Vulnerability

Asia’s climate bill is rising

The charts were sourced from the OECD development centre’s “Economic Outlook for Southeast Asia, China and India 2025: Enhancing Disaster Risk Financing” report released in December 2025



Counting losses: A convenience shop owner assesses the damage after floods in southern Thailand in November 2025. AP

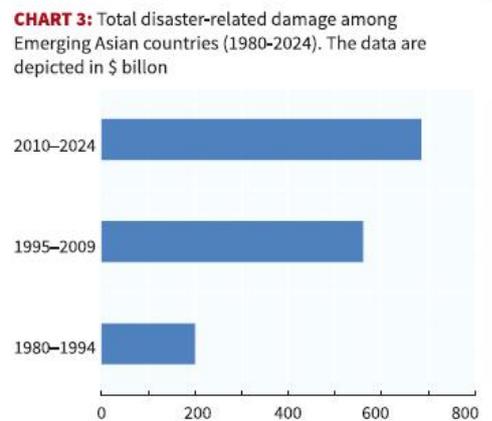
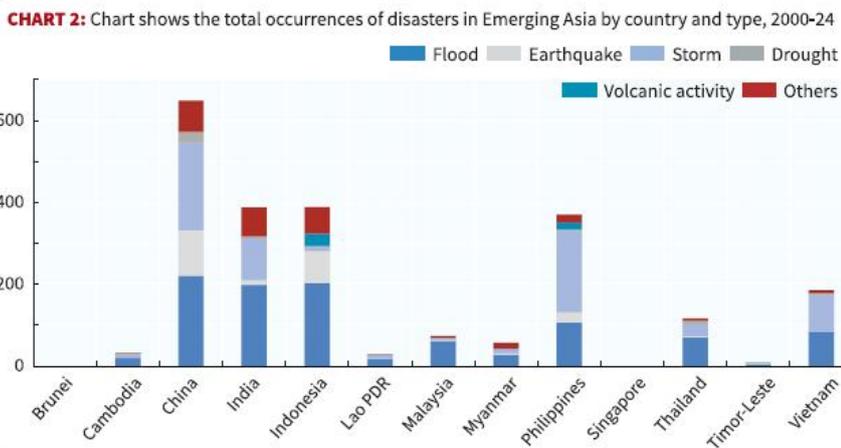


CHART 4: Average annual loss due to disasters, 1990–2024. The data are depicted as the percentage of a country’s GDP

CHART 5: World Risk Index, by country, 2025. The higher the score, the higher the risk

Emerging Asian economies, particularly India, face a critical escalation in natural disaster frequency and intensity. With an average of 100 disasters impacting 80 million people annually in the region, the human and economic toll has moved **Disaster Risk Finance (DRF)** to the center of national policy discourse.

- **Significant GDP Erosion:** India loses approximately **0.4% of its GDP annually** to natural disasters, a figure that highlights the severe fiscal strain on developmental goals and long-term economic stability.
- **Dominance of Hydrological Risks:** While regional threats vary, India’s primary vulnerability is hydrological, with non-storm-related **floods and landslides** accounting for nearly 63% of its annual economic disaster losses.
- **High World Risk Ranking:** India ranks **second in the World Risk Index** among analyzed Asian economies (surpassed only by the Philippines), reflecting high population exposure coupled with structural susceptibility.



- **Finance as a Mitigation Tool:** Disaster Risk Finance has transitioned from a reactive relief model to a data-driven foundation, focusing on "**pre-disaster**" **mitigation** and capacity building to reduce the "insurance gap" where 90% of losses remain currently uninsured.
- **Geographical Specificity:** Vulnerability is not uniform; while India deals with floods, neighboring China and Indonesia face higher seismic risks, and the Philippines contends with frequent tropical cyclones, necessitating **tailored regional response frameworks**.
- **The Exposure-Vulnerability Nexus:** Risk in India is calculated as a geometric mean of **Exposure** (population burden in hazard zones) and **Vulnerability** (the lack of coping capacity and structural resilience), making rapid unplanned urbanization a major risk multiplier.

Key Definitions

- **Disaster Risk Finance (DRF):** A suite of financial instruments (like the NDRF, insurance, and catastrophe bonds) designed to provide immediate liquidity and long-term funding for disaster response and reconstruction.
- **Exposure:** The presence of people, livelihoods, and assets in places that could be adversely affected by physical natural hazards.
- **Vulnerability:** Characteristics of a community or system that make it susceptible to the damaging effects of a hazard (e.g., poor building codes or lack of early warning).
- **Geometric Mean:** A mathematical calculation used in indices like the World Risk Index to ensure that high risk in one category (like exposure) cannot be completely offset by a low score in another.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** The bedrock of India's institutional framework, establishing the NDMA (National) and SDMAs (State) to shift from a "relief-centric" to a "proactive mitigation" approach.
- **Disaster Management (Amendment) Act, 2025:** Recently enacted to create **Urban Disaster Management Authorities** for state capitals and institutionalize a national disaster database for transparency.
- **Article 21:** Interpreted by the Judiciary to include the "**Right to a Safe Environment**" as part of the Right to Life, placing a positive obligation on the state to mitigate disaster risks.
- **15th Finance Commission Recommendations:** Formalized the **National Disaster Mitigation Fund (NDMF)** and introduced a performance-based allocation using the Disaster Risk Index (DRI).
- **Schedule VII (Entries 14, 17, 23):** While "Disaster Management" is not explicitly mentioned, related subjects (Agriculture, Water, Social Security) fall under State and Concurrent lists, necessitating **Cooperative Federalism**.

Conclusion

The 0.4% annual GDP loss is a stark reminder that disaster management is no longer just a humanitarian issue but a fundamental economic challenge. As India moves toward the "**Viksit Bharat 2047**" vision, integrating disaster-resilient infrastructure (through initiatives like CDRI) and robust risk-financing models will be essential to protect economic gains. The transition from "managing disasters" to "managing risks" is the only sustainable path forward.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Disaster and disaster management; Linkages between development and spread of extremism; Economics of infrastructure and growth.
 - **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; Statutory and regulatory bodies (NDMA).
 - **Current Affairs:** Impact of climate change on GDP, World Risk Index findings, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030).
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