



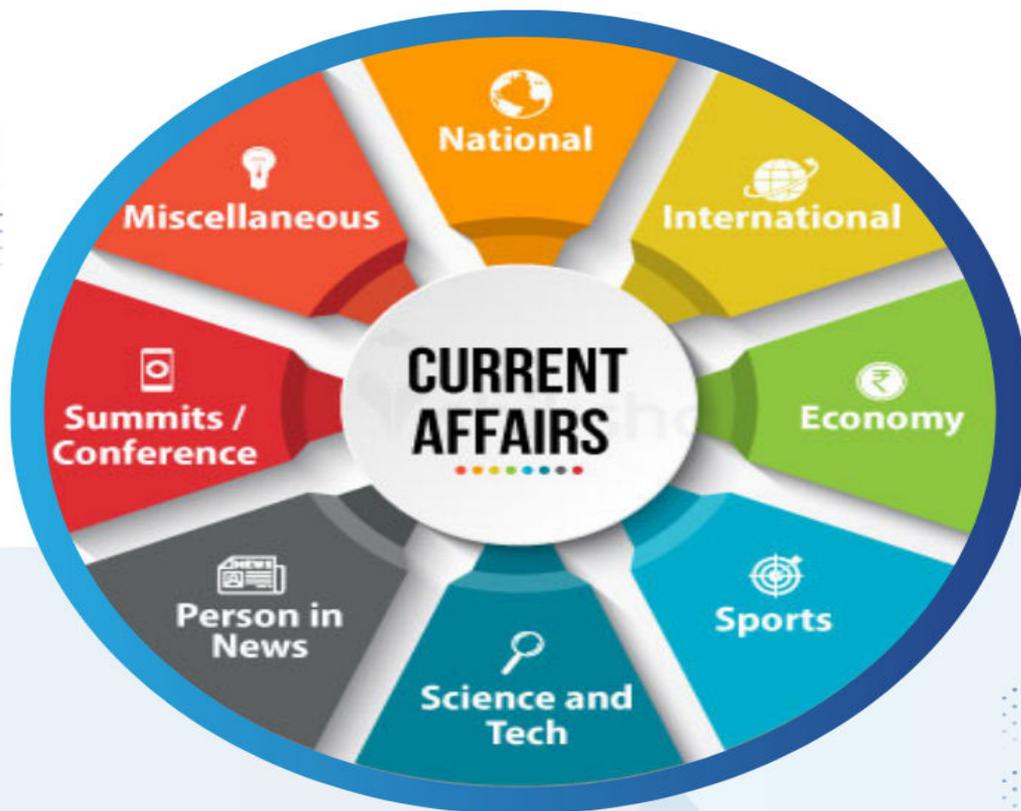
“ We help you reach for the star ”

VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 10/01/2026 (SATURDAY)



 **9972258970 & 9740702455**

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



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1. 8th Meeting of the National Traders' Welfare Board (NTWB)

Key Highlights of the 8th NTWB Meeting

- **Retail Sector Integration:** The meeting emphasized the retail sector's pivotal role in the Indian economy, focusing on enhancing awareness of welfare initiatives through virtual interactive sessions and coordinated outreach.
- **GST Reforms and "GST Bachat Utsav":** Discussions highlighted next-generation GST reforms aimed at simplifying procedures and reducing compliance burdens. The "GST Bachat Utsav" campaign was noted as a symbol of the trading community's support for these structural changes.
- **Vocal for Local and Swadeshi Sankalp Daud:** The Board proposed a nationwide 'Swadeshi Sankalp Daud' (12th–23rd January) to promote indigenous production and the spirit of 'Swadeshi' among citizens.
- **Digital Transformation via ONDC:** Small traders were urged to adopt the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) to democratize digital trade, break monopolies of large e-commerce players, and expand market access.
- **Policy Priorities:** Future strategies will focus on capacity building, financial support, social security measures, and transparent grievance redressal mechanisms to ensure the competitiveness of small-scale traders.
- **Inter-Ministerial Coordination:** The meeting involved ex-officio members from nine Union Ministries, ensuring a whole-of-government approach to addressing the representations received from trade associations.



Important Keypoints & Provisions

1. National Traders' Welfare Board (NTWB):

- **Establishment:** Constituted by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) to advise the Government on issues related to the welfare of traders and their employees.
- **Composition:** Includes a Chairperson (non-official), up to 15 non-official members nominated by the Government (representing trade associations), and ex-officio members from relevant Ministries.

2. Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC):

- It is a Section 8 company established by the DPIIT. It is not an application but a set of specifications designed to foster open interchange and connections between shoppers, technology platforms, and retailers.

3. Legal & Constitutional Context:

- **Article 301:** Provides for the freedom of trade, commerce, and intercourse throughout the territory of India, subject to reasonable restrictions.
- **Article 19(1)(g):** Guarantees the right to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade, or business.
- **Ease of Doing Business:** Aligns with the Government's Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, aimed at decriminalizing minor offenses to reduce the compliance burden on small businesses.



Definitions of Key Terms

- **Retail Trade:** The sale of goods or merchandise from a fixed location (such as a shop or kiosk) in small or individual lots for direct consumption by the purchaser.
- **Compliance Burden:** The administrative and financial costs (time and money) incurred by businesses to adhere to government regulations and legal requirements.
- **Social Security for Traders:** Refers to schemes like the *Pradhan Mantri Laghu Vyapari Maandhan Yojana*, which provides a monthly pension to small shopkeepers and self-employed persons after the age of 60.

Conclusion

The 8th NTWB meeting underscores a strategic shift toward digitizing the traditional retail landscape while ensuring a robust social safety net for small traders. By integrating initiatives like ONDC and GST reforms with grassroots movements like 'Vocal for Local', the government aims to create a more resilient, transparent, and competitive domestic trade ecosystem.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory, and various quasi-judicial bodies (Role of NTWB); Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, and employment; Effects of liberalization on the economy; E-technology in the aid of farmers/traders (ONDC).
- **Prelims:** Specifics of ONDC, DPIIT's role, and features of social security schemes for small business owners.

2. Prasar Bharati's 'Creator's Corner': Integrating the Digital Economy with Public Broadcasting

Summary of the Initiative

- **Launch of Creator's Corner:** Prasar Bharati has introduced a dedicated segment on DD News called 'Creator's Corner' to showcase content produced by independent digital creators across various domains.
- **Strategic Modernization:** The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) has designated 2026 as a year of institutional restructuring for Doordarshan and All India Radio to align them with modern technology and industry participation.
- **Empowering the Orange Economy:** The initiative is designed to harness the 'Orange Economy'—the economic potential of creativity and culture—leveraging intellectual property to generate employment and wealth.
- **Economic Impact of WAVES:** Building on the success of the WAVES platform, the government aims to further stimulate the creator economy, which has already engaged over 1 crore youth and contributed approximately 5,000 crore to the ecosystem.





- **Diverse Content Thematics:** The platform will feature reels and videos covering news, science and technology, sustainable development, health, and culture, effectively democratizing public broadcast airtime.
- **Structural Reform Journey:** This move marks the initial phase of a larger transformation aimed at making state broadcasters more inclusive, youth-oriented, and technology-driven.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

1. Prasar Bharati (Broadcasting Corporation of India) Act, 1990:

- Prasar Bharati is a statutory autonomous body. The Act mandates it to organize and conduct public broadcasting services to inform, educate, and entertain the public while ensuring a balanced development of broadcasting on radio and television.

2. Freedom of Speech and Expression (Article 19(1)(a)):

- The initiative supports the constitutional right to freedom of expression by providing a national platform to individual creators, thereby diversifying the voices in the public sphere.

3. IT Rules, 2021 (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code):

- Content creators on digital platforms are governed by these rules. Their integration into DD News necessitates a bridge between digital content standards and traditional broadcasting codes overseen by the I&B Ministry.

4. Promotion of Culture (Article 51A(f)):

- The emphasis on "Vocal for Local" and cultural content aligns with the fundamental duty to value and preserve the rich heritage of the country's composite culture.

Definitions of Key Concepts

- **Orange Economy:** An economic model based on the creation, production, and distribution of goods and services that use intellectual property as a primary input. It includes visual arts, design, digital media, and cultural heritage.
- **Creator Economy:** A software-facilitated economy that allows content creators and community builders to monetize their knowledge, skills, or creativity through digital platforms.
- **Public Service Broadcasting:** A broadcasting model intended for public benefit rather than for commercial or political interests, traditionally funded by the government but expected to remain editorially independent.

Additional Keypoints for Analysis

- **Democratization of Media:** By moving away from centralized content production, Prasar Bharati is allowing grassroots creators to influence the national narrative.
- **Youth Employment:** The focus on the creator economy is a direct response to the changing nature of work, where digital entrepreneurship is becoming a viable alternative to traditional jobs.
- **Technological Convergence:** The initiative reflects the blurring lines between "New Media" (Social media/Digital platforms) and "Legacy Media" (Television/Radio).



Conclusion

The launch of 'Creator's Corner' signifies a paradigm shift in India's public broadcasting strategy. By embracing the digital creator ecosystem, Prasar Bharati is not only refreshing its content delivery but also positioning itself as a catalyst for the 'Orange Economy'. This restructuring is essential for state institutions to remain relevant in an era of rapid digital consumption and to ensure that public broadcasting serves as a bridge between traditional values and modern innovation.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies (Prasar Bharati); Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth and employment (Orange Economy); Awareness in the fields of IT and Computers.
- **Prelims:** Prasar Bharati Act, the definition of Orange Economy, and recent initiatives of the Ministry of I&B (WAVES, Creator's Corner).

3. Diplomatic Transition: Taliban-Appointed Official at Afghan Embassy in India

Summary of the Diplomatic Shift

- **Arrival of Mufti Noor Ahmad Noor:** For the first time since the August 2021 takeover, a Taliban-appointed diplomat, Mufti Noor Ahmad Noor, has arrived in New Delhi to take charge of the Afghanistan Embassy as the Charge d'Affaires.
- **Institutional Restructuring:** The appointment follows a high-level agreement reached during Taliban Acting Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi's visit to Delhi in October 2025, where the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) agreed to upgrade the mission to full "Embassy status."
- **Engagement Without Recognition:** While India has allowed the posting of Taliban diplomats, it continues to maintain a policy of "pragmatic engagement" without granting formal sovereign recognition to the Taliban-led Islamic Emirate.
- **Symbolic Status Quo:** For the time being, the tricolour flag of the previous Afghan Republic (Red, Green, and Black) continues to fly over the embassy, and existing staff from the former regime remain in their roles to ensure administrative continuity.
- **Consular Expansion:** Prior to this development, India had already accepted Taliban-appointed nominees at the Afghan consulates in Mumbai and Hyderabad, marking a gradual, tiered approach to normalizing diplomatic channels.
- **Strategic Counter-balance:** The move is viewed as India's strategy to maintain a regional presence and protect its security interests, especially as the Taliban's relationship with Pakistan has significantly deteriorated.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

1. Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961):

- This international treaty provides the legal framework for diplomatic missions. India's decision to host a *Charge d'Affaires* (a diplomat who heads a mission in the absence of an ambassador) allows for functional communication without the high-level protocol of a formal Ambassadorial exchange.



2. Recognition of States vs. Governments:

- Under international law, India recognizes "Afghanistan" as a state but has not formally recognized the "Taliban" as its legitimate government. This distinction allows India to engage with the *de facto* authorities to protect humanitarian and security interests. **3. Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:**
- A Directive Principle of State Policy that mandates the state to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honourable relations between nations. Pragmatic engagement with Afghanistan is seen as an extension of this principle to prevent regional instability.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Charge d’Affaires:** A diplomat ranked below an ambassador who is temporarily in charge of an embassy or diplomatic mission.
- **Technical Mission:** A lower-level diplomatic presence (re-established by India in Kabul in 2022) focused primarily on coordinating humanitarian aid and development projects rather than political affairs.
- **De Facto Authority:** A government that exercises power and control over a territory in practice, regardless of whether it has been legally or formally recognized (*de jure*) by the international community.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its neighbourhood 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:** Security challenges and their management in border areas; Linkages of organized crime with terrorism (Counter-terrorism cooperation with Kabul).
- **Prelims:** Identifying the status of the Vienna Convention, the role of the MEA in diplomatic appointments, and the distinction between technical missions and full embassies.

Conclusion

The arrival of a Taliban-appointed head at the New Delhi embassy represents a "new normal" in India's West Asia policy. By shifting from total isolation to institutionalized interaction, India seeks to secure its \$3 billion investment in Afghan infrastructure and ensure that Afghan soil is not used for anti-India terror activities. This calibrated thawing of ties reflects a shift from normative diplomacy to hard-nosed realpolitik in a volatile geopolitical landscape.

4. Third International Bharatiya Languages Conference – 2026

Summary of the Conference

- **Inaugural Event:** The conference was held at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), New Delhi, inaugurated by Vice President Shri C. P. Radhakrishnan, bringing together delegates from over 70 countries.
- **Philosophical Unity:** The Vice President emphasized that Bharatiya languages are not contradictory but complementary, serving as "living consciences of civilization" and carriers of shared civilizational memory.



- **Unified Language Family:** A significant takeaway was the challenge to the traditional "four-family" classification of Indian languages, positing instead that they belong to a single, integrated family bound by a shared ethos.
- **Preservation of Knowledge:** Discussions highlighted that languages have historically preserved invaluable treasures of Yoga, Ayurveda, and philosophy through ancient scripts like palm-leaf manuscripts and stone inscriptions.
- **Modern Integration:** The conference advocated for the use of technology, digital archives, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) to protect endangered languages and facilitate multilingual education.
- **Global Outreach:** With over 100 international delegates, the event focused on the global dissemination of Indian wisdom and contemporary challenges like the decline of minor dialects.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

1. The Eighth Schedule (Articles 344(1) and 351):

- Lists 22 officially recognized languages. Originally containing 14, others were added via the **21st Amendment** (Sindhi, 1967), **71st Amendment** (Konkani, Manipuri, Nepali, 1992), and **92nd Amendment** (Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Santhali, 2004).
- **2. Article 351 (Directive for Development of Hindi):**
 - Mandates the Union to promote Hindi so it serves as a medium of expression for all elements of India's **composite culture**, assimilating styles from Hindustani and other Eighth Schedule languages.
- **3. Article 350A & 350B:**
 - **350A:** Obligates states to provide primary instruction in the **mother tongue** for linguistic minority groups.
 - **350B:** Provides for a **Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities** to investigate safeguards for linguistic groups.
- **4. Article 29 (Protection of Interests of Minorities):**
 - Guarantees any section of citizens with a distinct language, script, or culture the right to conserve the same.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Linguistic Diversity Index (LDI):** A measure used to quantify the probability that two people selected at random in a country will have different mother tongues. India possesses one of the highest LDIs globally.
- **Composite Culture:** A unique social reality in India where diverse religious, linguistic, and regional traditions blend into a unified national identity.
- **Gyan Bharatam Mission:** A government initiative focused on the preservation, documentation, and digital dissemination of ancient Indian manuscripts across various languages.

Conclusion

The Third International Bharatiya Languages Conference reinforces the idea that linguistic diversity is a source of strength rather than friction. By transitioning from a fragmented view of language families to a unified "Bharatiya" perspective, the government aims to use the National Education



Policy (NEP) 2020 and digital tools to ensure that Indian languages remain competitive and relevant in the global knowledge economy.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Indian Culture – Salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature, and Architecture; Diversity of India.
- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development (NEP 2020); Constitutional provisions regarding official languages and linguistic minorities.
- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology (AI in translation and language preservation); Internal Security (Linguistic identity as a factor in federal harmony).
- **Prelims:** Specifically, the Eighth Schedule amendments, the role of IGNCA, and the criteria for **Classical Language** status (currently 6 languages: Tamil, Sanskrit, Kannada, Telugu, Malayalam, and Odia).

5. Safeguarding Victim Dignity: Beyond Legislative Reforms

Summary of the Core Issues

- **The "Second Crime":** The suicide of a young doctor in Phaltan (October 2025) underscores that the legal system's failure is often followed by a "second crime"—the character assassination of the victim by society and institutions.
- **Institutional Betrayal:** Public comments by state officials regarding a victim's private life represent a catastrophic failure of constitutional morality and a breach of the trust placed in protective bodies like Women's Commissions.
- **Prohibition of Character Evidence:** Modern criminal law (BSA, 2023) explicitly forbids using a victim's personal history or "immoral character" as a defense to argue consent or justify the crime.
- **Judicial Shield for Dignity:** The Supreme Court has consistently held that a victim's testimony should not be viewed with suspicion based on social perceptions of "loose morals" or prior sexual history.
- **Identity Protection:** The law mandates a strict ban on disclosing the identity of sexual assault survivors to prevent social ostracization; this protection extends even after a victim's death.
- **Gap in Implementation:** While the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) is "women-centric" on paper, the Phaltan case highlights that without empathetic sensitization of police and society, justice remains elusive.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

1. Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA), 2023:

- **Section 50 (formerly Sec 53A Evidence Act):** States that evidence of the victim's character or previous sexual experience is not relevant on the issue of consent or the quality of consent.
 - **Section 48 (formerly Sec 146 Evidence Act):** Prohibits putting questions to the victim during cross-examination about her general "immoral character."
- #### 2. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023:
- **Section 72 (formerly Sec 228A IPC):** Criminalizes the printing or publication of the name or any matter which may reveal the identity of a victim of sexual offences. Punishment includes imprisonment up to 2 years.
- #### 3. Landmark Judgments:



- **State of Punjab vs. Gurmit Singh (1996):** The Court ruled that a victim's testimony is sufficient for conviction and warned against character assassination during trials.
- **Nipun Saxena vs. Union of India (2018):** Established comprehensive guidelines for protecting the identity of rape survivors, emphasizing that their names should not be mentioned even in court orders. **4. Constitutional Morality:**
- Derived from **Article 21** (Right to Life and Dignity), it mandates that all state functionaries must act in a way that preserves the inherent dignity of individuals, especially the vulnerable.

Key Word Definitions

- **Secondary Victimization:** The re-traumatization of a victim through the insensitive response of institutions (police, courts, media) and individuals after the original crime.
- **Character Evidence:** Evidence used to suggest that a person acted in a certain way based on their past behavior or reputation; largely prohibited in sexual assault cases to protect the victim.
- **Dying Declaration:** A statement made by a person who believes they are about to die, concerning the cause or circumstances of their death. In the Phaltan case, the note on the palm serves as a *prima facie* dying declaration.

Implementation Strategies for Reform

- **Trauma-Informed Training:** Mandatory sensitization for the "three pillars" (Police, Prosecutors, Judges) to handle sensitive cases with empathy rather than suspicion.
- **Infrastructure Boost:** Expanding forensic laboratories and dedicated "Women's Desks" to ensure that digital and physical evidence is collected without violating privacy.
- **Curbing Media Scrutiny:** Strict enforcement of identity protection laws to prevent "social verdicts" that try the victim's character before the judicial trial begins.

Conclusion

The Phaltan tragedy serves as a grim reminder that legislative changes like the BNS and BSA are mere "acts of conscience" that require "acts of practice" to succeed. True justice is achieved only when the legal mandate to protect dignity is matched by a societal shift away from victim-blaming. Until institutions uphold constitutional morality over patriarchal prejudices, the "second crime" will continue to silence those the law seeks to protect.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Social Issues (Role of women and women's organizations, societal mindset, and patriarchy).
- **GS Paper II:** Governance and Polity (Criminal Justice Reforms, Statutory bodies like Women's Commissions, Judicial overreach/activism).
- **GS Paper IV:** Ethics and Human Interface (Constitutional morality, institutional betrayal, and the ethics of public commentary).



6. Israel's Recognition of Somaliland: A Geopolitical Rupture in the Horn of Africa

Summary of the Diplomatic Shift

- **Historic Recognition:** In December 2025, Israel became the first sovereign state to formally recognize Somaliland as an independent nation, moving beyond the "technical mission" or "representative office" status held by other powers.
- **Strategic Maritime Control:** The move provides Israel with a critical security and intelligence foothold near the **Bab el-Mandeb Strait**, directly countering Houthi-led threats and Iranian influence in the Red Sea corridor.
- **China's "One China" Dilemma:** Beijing views this as a dangerous precedent for separatism, directly paralleling its stance on Taiwan. Somaliland's existing official ties with Taipei (since 2020) further intensify this diplomatic friction.
- **Rivalry Near Djibouti:** By legitimizing Somaliland, Israel and its allies (UAE and potentially the US) create a rival logistics and security hub, threatening China's leverage centered around its first overseas military base in neighboring Djibouti.
- **Regional Recalibration:** This development follows Ethiopia's 2024 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Somaliland for port access, signaling a broader international shift that isolates the federal government in Mogadishu.
- **The "Orange Economy" and Stability:** Unlike the volatile south, Somaliland's relative peace and democratic institutions over three decades have made it an increasingly attractive partner for "geopolitical entrepreneurs."

Constitutional and Legal Context

1. Montevideo Convention (1933):

- Defines the rights and duties of states. Somaliland meets the four criteria: a permanent population, a defined territory, a government, and the capacity to enter into relations with other states. Israel's move addresses the final, most contested criterion.
- **2. Principle of Territorial Integrity:** Under the UN Charter and the African Union (AU) Constitutive Act, the sanctity of colonial borders is upheld. Somalia maintains that Somaliland's secession violates the territorial integrity of the Somali Republic as recognized in 1960.
- **3. One China Principle:** A core tenet of China's foreign policy which asserts that there is only one China and Taiwan is an inalienable part of it. Somaliland is the only African entity besides Eswatini to host a "Taiwan Representative Office," making it a focal point of Chinese "wolf warrior" diplomacy.

Key Word Definitions

- **Horn of Africa:** A peninsula in Northeast Africa (Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti) that sits along the world's most vital shipping lanes connecting the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean via the Suez Canal.
- **De Facto vs. De Jure State:** Somaliland is a *de facto* state (functioning as one in practice) but lacked *de jure* (legal international) recognition until Israel's 2025 declaration.
- **Choke Point:** A strategic narrow passage (like the Bab el-Mandeb) that can be easily blocked to disrupt global trade and energy flows.



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:** Security challenges and their management in border areas; Maritime security and the significance of the "String of Pearls" vs. "Necklace of Diamonds" in the Indian Ocean Region.
- **Prelims:** Mapping of the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Bab el-Mandeb, and the location of Djibouti and Somaliland (Berbera Port).

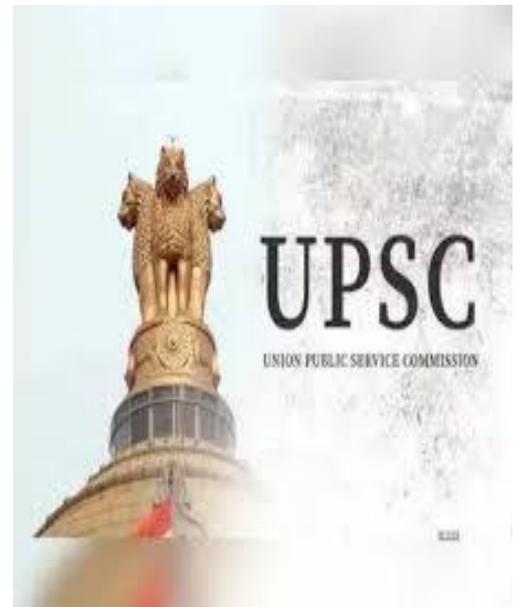
Conclusion

Israel's recognition of Somaliland has transformed a long-standing "frozen conflict" into a central theater of great-power competition. For India, this necessitates a careful balancing act: protecting its maritime interests in the Gulf of Aden while respecting the territorial integrity of Somalia, a fellow IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association) member. As the Red Sea becomes increasingly militarized, the "Somaliland Card" will likely be used by middle powers to challenge the established influence of China and the US in the region.

7. UPSC Introduces AI-Enabled Face Authentication for Exam Integrity

Summary of the New Mandate

- **Mandatory Verification:** The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) has officially announced that all candidates appearing for its examinations will now undergo compulsory face authentication at the exam venues.
- **Success of Pilot Project:** This decision follows a successful pilot program conducted in September 2025 at select centres in Gurugram, which verified candidates in an average of 8 to 10 seconds per person using AI-enabled technology.
- **Integrated Biometric Security:** In collaboration with the National e-Governance Division (NeGD), the Commission is incorporating a multi-layered security approach, including Aadhaar-based fingerprint authentication and QR code scanning of e-admit cards.
- **Curbing Impersonation:** The primary objective is to eliminate "proxy" candidates and fraudulent practices, ensuring that the individual appearing for the exam matches the digital record submitted during registration.
- **Institutional Reforms:** These measures are part of a broader overhaul triggered by recent high-profile controversies, such as the Puja Khedkar case and concerns over the integrity of national-level entrance tests.
- **Efficiency and Ease:** Despite the added security, the system is designed to streamline the entry process, significantly reducing the manual verification time required for the nearly 12 lakh candidates who appear for UPSC's 14 major annual exams.





Important Keypoints & Provisions

1. Administrative Restructuring:

- **Timely Document Verification:** Following the 2024 rule amendment, candidates must now submit educational, caste, and disability certificates at the **Preliminary stage**. Previously, this was only required after qualifying for the Mains.
- **Digital Infrastructure:** The UPSC has sought partnerships with Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) to provide live AI-based CCTV surveillance, with at least one camera for every 24 candidates in a room.
- **2. Legal and Regulatory Framework:**
- **Aadhaar Act, 2016:** The biometric authentication aligns with Section 4 of the Act, allowing for voluntary or mandatory identity verification for state-sponsored benefits or services, ensuring the "integrity of the database."
- **Article 320 of the Constitution:** Grants the UPSC the power and duty to conduct examinations for appointments to the services of the Union. These reforms fall under the Commission's mandate to ensure a "fair and impartial" selection process.
- **Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000:** Provisions regarding digital signatures and secure electronic records govern the storage and encryption of the biometric data captured at centres.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Face Authentication:** An AI-driven process that captures a live image of a person's face and compares it with a stored digital photograph to verify identity.
- **Impersonation:** The act of pretending to be another person for the purpose of fraud; in exams, this usually involves a "proxy" writer or candidate.
- **Constitutional Morality:** A concept often cited by the judiciary, referring to adherence to the core principles of the Constitution—in this context, ensuring equality of opportunity and merit-based selection without fraud.

Conclusion

The transition to AI-enabled face authentication marks a significant technological leap for the century-old UPSC. By moving away from purely manual checks to a biometric-first approach, the Commission aims to restore public trust and fortify the "sanctity of the hall." While these reforms address the technical loopholes exploited in the past, their success will depend on the robust protection of candidate data and the seamless integration of technology across 3,000 diverse venues.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies (UPSC); Role of civil services in a democracy.
- **GS Paper III:** Challenges to internal security through communication networks; Basics of cyber security; Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, and Robotics (AI Applications).
- **GS Paper IV:** Probity in Governance; Philosophical basis of governance and probity; Case studies on ethical dilemmas in administration (Puja Khedkar case analysis).



8. Samagra Shiksha 3.0: Strategic Roadmap for School Education Reforms

Summary of the Consultative Meeting

- **Inception of Samagra Shiksha 3.0:** Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan chaired a high-level meeting to develop a strategic framework for the next phase of India's integrated school education scheme, aligning it with the goals of **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**.
- **Community-Centric Governance:** A key proposal is to "entrust schools to society," advocating for increased public participation in **School Management Committees (SMCs)** to enhance accountability and holistic student development.
- **Technology and Skill Integration:** The 3.0 phase prioritizes the "meaningful integration of technology" and the embedding of vocational pathways and skilling from the middle school level to prepare students for a rapidly changing economy.
- **Viksit Bharat 2047 Vision:** The roadmap is designed to achieve **100% school enrolment** up to Class 12 by 2047, bridging existing learning gaps and reducing dropout rates through outcome-oriented interventions.
- **Cooperative Federalism:** The Centre and States engaged in a dialogue to balance government responsibility (teacher salaries and systems) with social responsibility (school operations) and requested additional support for teacher capacity building.
- **Outcome-Based Learning:** Moving beyond infrastructure, the new phase focuses on measurable learning indicators, nutrition outcomes, and moving the "Amrit Peedhi" (the current generation) away from colonial educational mindsets.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

1. Article 21A:

- Inserted by the **86th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2002**, it makes free and compulsory education a Fundamental Right for all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. **2. Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009:**
- Provides the legal framework to implement Article 21A. It mandates **School Management Committees (SMCs)** to include 75% parents/guardians to ensure community-led oversight of schools. **3. 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts:**
- Empower Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies to manage elementary and secondary education, supporting the Minister's vision of decentralizing school management to society. **4. Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 45):**
- Directs the State to provide early childhood care and education for all children until they complete the age of six years.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Samagra Shiksha:** An overarching, centrally sponsored scheme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to Class 12, subsuming Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA), and Teacher Education (TE).
- **Viksit Bharat 2047:** The Government of India's vision to transform the country into a developed nation by the 100th year of its independence, with education as a primary pillar.



- **Macaulay Mindset:** A reference to the colonial-era education system designed to produce clerks; current reforms aim to replace this with a system rooted in Indian values (**Bharatiyata**) and critical thinking.
- **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER):** The total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the official age group corresponding to that level.

Key Features of the Transition to 3.0

- **Holistic Progress Cards (HPC):** Transitioning from traditional marks-based reports to a 360-degree overview of a child's cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical growth.
- **DIETs of Excellence:** Upgrading all 613 District Institutes of Education and Training into centers of excellence for reimagining teacher training.
- **NIPUN Bharat Linkage:** Deepening the focus on **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)** to ensure every child masters basic reading and math by Grade 3.

Conclusion

Samagra Shiksha 3.0 represents a paradigm shift from "schooling for all" to "learning for all." By reimagining schools as social institutions rather than mere government administrative units, the scheme seeks to foster a decentralized, technology-driven, and value-based ecosystem. The success of this phase will hinge on the effective convergence of central funding, state execution, and active community participation.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education; Human Resources; Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, and employment (Skilling and Vocationalization).
- **Prelims:** Specifically, the funding pattern of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (60:40 for most states), the provisions of the RTE Act, and objectives of NEP 2020.

9. Milestone in India's Hypersonic Missile Programme: DRDO's Scramjet Test

Summary of the Achievement

- **Successful Long-Duration Test:** The Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL), Hyderabad, successfully conducted a 12-minute ground test of an **Actively-Cooled Scramjet Full-Scale Combustor** on January 9, 2026.
- **Supersonic Combustion Demonstrated:** The test validated the performance of a full-scale engine capable of sustaining combustion while airflow moves at supersonic speeds, a critical requirement for hypersonic flight.
- **Technological Advancement:** This achievement builds upon the subscale test conducted in April 2025 (which lasted over 1,000 seconds), marking the transition from experimental models to full-scale operational hardware.
- **Indigenous Infrastructure:** The trial was held at the state-of-the-art **Scramjet Connect Pipe Test (SCPT) Facility**, an indigenously developed infrastructure designed to simulate extreme hypersonic flight conditions.



- **Global Standing:** With this milestone, India joins an elite group of nations (USA, Russia, and China) possessing the advanced aerospace capability to develop long-endurance hypersonic cruise missiles.
- **Foundation for HSTDV:** The successful combustor performance provides a solid foundation for the next phase of the **Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle (HSTDV)** and future Hypersonic Cruise Missile (HCM) systems.

Constitutional & Legal Context

1. Article 51A (h): * A Fundamental Duty that mandates every citizen to develop the scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform. Advancements in defence technology like the Scramjet are realizations of this constitutional spirit. 2. Allocation of Business Rules, 1961: * Under these rules, the Department of Defence Research and Development (DRDO) is mandated to advise the Government on scientific aspects of military equipment and to formulate research and development plans for defence. 3. Technology Transition Policy: * The project highlights the synergy between government labs and Industry Partners, adhering to the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* initiative and the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) that prioritizes indigenous design and manufacturing.

Key Definitions

- **Hypersonic Speed:** Speeds exceeding **Mach 5** (five times the speed of sound, approximately 6,125 km/h). At these speeds, air undergoes chemical changes (dissociation), making flight physics highly complex.
- **Scramjet (Supersonic Combustion Ramjet):** An air-breathing engine where combustion happens in a stream of air moving at supersonic speeds. Unlike rockets, it does not carry an oxidizer, taking oxygen directly from the atmosphere.
- **Active Cooling:** A thermal management technique where fuel or a coolant is circulated through the engine walls to absorb the extreme heat generated by friction at hypersonic speeds, preventing the engine from melting.
- **Mach Number:** A dimensionless quantity representing the ratio of the speed of an object to the local speed of sound.

Important Keypoints & Significance

- **Strategic Deterrence:** Hypersonic missiles are nearly impossible to intercept by current air defence systems due to their extreme speed and maneuverability, significantly enhancing India's second-strike capability.
- **Air-Breathing Advantage:** By using atmospheric oxygen, the missile becomes lighter and can carry a larger payload compared to traditional rocket-powered ballistic missiles.
- **Fuel Efficiency:** Scramjets are more efficient for long-duration "cruise" flights within the atmosphere compared to rockets, which are typically used for short-duration boosts into space.
- **Dual Use:** While the current focus is military (Hypersonic Cruise Missiles), this technology is a precursor to low-cost space launch vehicles and future hypersonic passenger travel.

Conclusion

The 12-minute sustained ground test of the full-scale scramjet combustor is a "path-breaking" moment for Indian defence. It proves that DRDO has mastered the complex "fire in a hurricane" challenge—maintaining a stable flame in supersonic winds. This success bridges the gap between laboratory research and a viable,



combat-ready hypersonic weapon system, ensuring India remains technologically sovereign in the future of warfare.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology (DRDO's HSTDV & Scramjet).
- **GS Paper III:** Security challenges and their management; Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.
- **Prelims:** Specifically, the differences between Ramjet and Scramjet, definitions of speed regimes (Mach 1-5+), and the role of DRDL Hyderabad.

10. NGT Verdict on Varanasi Tent City: Balancing Tourism with Ecological Integrity

Summary of the Judicial Intervention

- **Environmental Violation Found:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT) ruled on January 8, 2026, that the luxury 'Tent City' established on the Ganga riverbed in 2023 operated in "flagrant violation" of green norms and the River Ganga Order, 2016.
- **Pollution and Waste Mismanagement:** A seven-member joint committee reported that the project directly discharged untreated sewage into the river and caused significant harm to the local flora and fauna.
- **Lack of Prior Approval:** The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) revealed that the project developers sought mandatory prior approval only after the facility had already been implemented and operationalized.
- **Financial Penalties:** The Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) has been directed to expeditiously recover an environmental compensation of approximately 17 lakh from each of the two private operating companies.
- **Future Prohibition:** The NGT has issued a permanent directive to government authorities to ensure that no similar commercial tent cities are permitted on the banks of the Ganga or its tributaries in the future.
- **Wildlife Sanctuary Concerns:** Allegations regarding the illegal de-notification of the 'Kachhua (Turtle) Wildlife Sanctuary' to facilitate the project remain sub-judice before the Supreme Court.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

1. National Green Tribunal (NGT) Act, 2010:

- Established under **Article 21** (Right to a healthy environment), the NGT is a specialized body equipped with the expertise to handle environmental disputes involving multi-disciplinary issues.
- #### 2. River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order, 2016:
- Issued under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**, this order prohibits any construction or commercial activity on the active floodplains and riverbeds of the Ganga without prior environmental clearance from the NMCG.





3. The Doctrine of Public Trust:

- A legal principle (affirmed in *MC Mehta v. Kamal Nath*) stating that certain resources like rivers, forests, and air are held by the State as a trustee for the free and unimpeded use of the general public and cannot be converted into private commercial use. **4. Article 48A and 51A(g):**
- **48A (DPSP):** The State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **51A(g) (Fundamental Duty):** To protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.

Key Word Definitions

- **Active Floodplain:** The area of relatively smooth land adjacent to a river channel that is frequently flooded and is vital for maintaining the river's ecological health and groundwater recharge.
- **Environmental Compensation:** A "polluter pays" principle-based fine intended to rectify the damage caused to the environment and deter future violations.
- **De-notification:** The official process of removing the protected status of a designated wildlife area or sanctuary, often requiring approval from the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL).
- **Flora and Fauna:** The collective term for the plant (flora) and animal (fauna) life of a particular region or time.

Additional Keypoints for Analysis

- **Tourism vs. Ecology:** The case highlights the "sustainable development" challenge where high-value tourism projects (promoted as the 'Orange Economy') clash with the primary mandate of 'Aviral' (continuous) and 'Nirmal' (clean) Ganga.
- **Procedural Lapses:** The fact that the project was inaugurated by the highest executive office before regulatory clearances were secured underscores a gap in administrative due diligence.
- **Ecological Flow (e-flow):** The NGT emphasized that permanent or semi-permanent structures on riverbeds obstruct the natural flow and self-purifying capacity of the river.

Conclusion

The NGT's order on the Varanasi Tent City serves as a corrective measure against the commercialization of sensitive river ecosystems. While religious and heritage tourism are vital for the local economy, they cannot be pursued at the cost of the river's biological and chemical integrity. This judgment reaffirms the supremacy of environmental law over administrative enthusiasm and sets a precedent for the protection of floodplains across India.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies (NGT); Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.
- **GS Paper III:** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment; Internal security challenges (Ecological security).
- **Prelims:** Specifics of the River Ganga Order 2016, powers of the NGT, and the location/status of the Kachhua Wildlife Sanctuary.