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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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1. Constitutional Friction: Governor's Address and Legislative Impasse in Karnataka

The recent walkout by Karnataka Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot during the joint session of the State Legislature has reignited the debate surrounding the discretionary powers of the Governor versus the constitutional mandate of the Council of Ministers. This incident highlights growing tensions in federal relations, particularly regarding the customary address provided under Article 176.

Core Summary of the Incident

- **Departure from Convention:** The Governor refused to read the 122-paragraph address prepared by the State Cabinet, opting instead for a brief two-line statement before exiting the House.
- **Contentious Objections:** The friction arose primarily from specific paragraphs in the speech that were critical of the Union Government's policies, which the Governor reportedly found objectionable.
- **Procedural Breach:** The Governor departed before the playing of the National Anthem, leading to allegations from the State Government regarding the "insult to national symbols" and a breach of legislative decorum.
- **Cabinet Supremacy:** Chief Minister Siddaramaiah maintained that the Governor is constitutionally bound to read the text approved by the Cabinet, as the speech represents the government's policies, not the Governor's personal views.
- **Legal Recourse:** The Karnataka government is currently exploring the possibility of approaching the Supreme Court to seek a definitive interpretation of the Governor's role during mandatory addresses.
- **Political Allegations:** The incident has been characterized by the ruling party as an instance of the Raj Bhavan acting as an agent of the Centre, thereby undermining the principles of cooperative federalism.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 176(1):** Mandates that at the commencement of the first session after each general election and at the commencement of the first session of each year, the Governor shall address both Houses of the Legislature.
- **Article 163:** Stipulates that the Governor shall exercise his functions with the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, except in matters where he is required to act in his discretion. The "Address" is generally not considered a discretionary power.
- **Rule of Law and Precedents:** In the **Shamsher Singh v. State of Punjab (1974)** case, the Supreme Court held that the Governor must act according to the advice of the Council of Ministers.
- **National Honour Act, 1971:** Relates to the prevention of insults to national symbols; the government cited this in relation to the Governor leaving before the National Anthem.

Key Definitions for UPSC

- **Customary Address:** A statement of the government's policy and program for the upcoming year, delivered by the Head of State (President/Governor) but drafted by the executive.



- **Constitutional Convention:** Unwritten rules of political practice that are regarded as binding by those who operate the constitution, though they are not legally enforceable by courts.
- **Gherao:** A form of protest where a group of people surrounds a person in authority to prevent them from leaving until demands are met.

Additional Key Insights

- **The "Speech" as Government Policy:** Historically, the Governor's address is a report card and a roadmap of the elected government. High Courts (e.g., Calcutta High Court in the 1960s) have suggested that while a Governor can omit parts, they cannot rewrite or substitute the speech with their own text.
- **Role of the Speaker:** In such situations of pandemonium, the Speaker's role in maintaining order and the subsequent "Motion of Thanks" becomes legally complex if the full speech was never technically "delivered."

Conclusion

The impasse in Karnataka underscores a persistent constitutional "grey area" where political friction meets ceremonial duty. While the Governor holds a high constitutional office, the parliamentary system places the real executive power with the Council of Ministers. Any deviation from reading the Cabinet-approved speech threatens the delicate balance of state autonomy and federal oversight. Strengthening the norms suggested by the Sarkaria and Punchhi Commissions regarding the Governor's "neutrality" is essential to prevent such legislative disruptions.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure; Appointment, powers, and functions of the Governor; Constitutional Posts.
- **Prelims:** Articles 163, 175, and 176; Discretionary powers of the Governor.
- **Ethics (GS IV):** Constitutional morality and the conduct of high-ranking public officials.

2. Global Diplomacy: The Launch of Trump's "Board of Peace" and India's Strategic Silence

The inauguration of the "Board of Peace" (BoP) by U.S. President Donald Trump at the World Economic Forum in Davos marks a significant, albeit controversial, shift in international conflict resolution. Designed initially to oversee the Gaza ceasefire, the body's expansive mandate and its potential to rival the United Nations have sparked intense global debate, with India notably maintaining a "wait and watch" stance.

Core Summary of the Initiative

- **Inauguration and Mandate:** President Trump launched the Board of Peace to manage the post-war transition in Gaza, including reconstruction, governance, and maintaining the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.
- **Global Participation:** While 59 countries reportedly signed the charter, only 19 nations—including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Hungary—were present at the Davos ceremony, highlighting a split among traditional U.S. allies.
- **India's Absence:** Despite a personal invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India abstained from the ceremony. New Delhi is currently evaluating the board's legitimacy, its impact on the UN framework, and its alignment with India's long-standing "Two-State Solution" policy.



- **UN Rivalry Concerns:** Critics and several Western powers, including France and the UK, have expressed concerns that the BoP aims to bypass or replace the United Nations, potentially undermining the established rules-based international order.
- **Financial and Structural Tiers:** The draft charter proposes a unique "permanent membership" available for a \$1 billion fee, with the board being chaired by Trump and governed by an executive committee of business leaders and close associates.
- **Regional Implications:** The inclusion of Pakistan and the board's potential to wade into other "global conflicts" raises significant security concerns for India, particularly regarding third-party mediation in bilateral issues.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles):** The Indian Constitution mandates that the State shall endeavor to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations. India's decision-making is guided by these constitutional ideals.
- **UN Security Council Resolution 2803 (2025):** This resolution reportedly endorsed the "Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict," providing a thin layer of international legal backing to the board, though its broader role remains outside UN jurisdiction.
- **Pacta Sunt Servanda:** A fundamental principle of international law meaning "agreements must be kept." India's cautious approach reflects its commitment to established treaties and the UN Charter over transactional diplomatic arrangements.



Key Definitions for UPSC

- **Board of Peace (BoP):** A U.S.-led international body established in 2026 to oversee the transition in Gaza and potentially mediate global conflicts.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** A foreign policy doctrine where a state makes decisions based on its national interests without being pressured by other states or joining restrictive alliances.
- **Two-State Solution:** The proposed diplomatic solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, envisioning an independent State of Palestine alongside the State of Israel.

Additional Key Insights

- **The "Transactional" Diplomacy Model:** The \$1 billion fee for permanent membership and the exclusion of established Palestinian leadership from the board's primary structure mark a departure from traditional multilateral diplomacy.
- **Post-Conflict Governance:** The board oversees the "National Committee for the Administration of Gaza" (NCAG), a technocratic body intended to replace Hamas's civil administration under U.S. and BoP supervision.
- **Western Skepticism:** The absence of G7 nations like France, Germany, and the UK suggests a significant rift in the Western bloc regarding the privatization of global peace brokering.



Conclusion

The Board of Peace represents a "bold new approach" that prioritizes transactional leadership over collective multilateralism. For India, the dilemma lies in balancing its strategic partnership with the U.S. against its commitment to the United Nations and its own regional security interests. As the board evolves, India's eventual decision will be a litmus test for its "Strategic Autonomy" in a rapidly shifting world order where personal diplomacy increasingly challenges institutional norms.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India; Effect of policies of developed countries on India's interests; Important International institutions (UN vs. BoP).
- **International Relations:** India's policy toward West Asia (Gaza conflict); The role of the U.S. in Indian foreign policy; Challenges to Multilateralism.
- **Current Affairs:** Davos 2026 outcomes and the evolution of "Trumpian" foreign policy in his second/extended term.

3. Secondary Particulate Matter as the Major Cause of Winter Air Pollution in Delhi-NCR (CAQM Report)

Key Findings (Summary in 5–6 Bullet Points)

- CAQM synthesis report identifies secondary particulate matter (27%) as the single largest contributor to winter air pollution in Delhi-NCR.
- Transport emissions (23%) and biomass burning (20%) including municipal solid waste and crop residue are major primary sources.
- Dust contributes 15% while industrial emissions account for 9% of winter pollution load.
- Secondary particulate matter forms through atmospheric chemical reactions rather than being emitted directly.
- Ammonia plays a critical catalytic role in the formation of secondary particulates.
- Uniform source apportionment is intended to bridge gaps between scientific data and actionable policy.



Background and Context

- The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) prepared a synthesis of existing source-apportionment studies for Delhi-NCR.
- The report was submitted following a Supreme Court direction dated January 6, seeking identification of major causes of worsening AQI.
- Objective was to evolve a unanimous, evidence-based understanding of pollution sources to guide effective interventions.

Source-wise Contribution to Winter Air Pollution

- Secondary particulate matter: 27%
- Transport sector emissions: 23%



- Biomass burning (crop residue and municipal solid waste): 20%
- Dust (road, construction, natural): 15%
- Industrial emissions: 9%

Understanding Secondary Particulate Matter (Definition)

- Secondary particulate matter refers to fine particles formed in the atmosphere through chemical reactions among precursor gases such as sulphur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, ammonia, and volatile organic compounds.
- Unlike primary particulate matter, it is not directly emitted from sources but forms after emission.

Role of Precursor Gases and Ammonia

- Source-apportionment studies identify nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, and VOCs as key precursors.
- Ammonia enables atmospheric reactions leading to formation of ammonium sulphates and ammonium nitrates.
- Nearly 80% of ammonia emissions in India originate from fertilizer use and livestock excreta, linking agriculture with urban air pollution.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- Article 21 of the Constitution guarantees the Right to Life, interpreted by courts to include the right to a clean environment.
- CAQM is a statutory body under the Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021.
- Supreme Court exercises jurisdiction under Article 32 to enforce environmental rights and seek scientific accountability.

Policy and Governance Implications

- Focus must shift from only visible sources to invisible chemical processes in the atmosphere.
- Integrated policy required across sectors such as agriculture, transport, waste management, and energy.
- Control of ammonia emissions becomes as important as managing vehicular and industrial pollution.

Conclusion

The CAQM report underscores that winter air pollution in Delhi-NCR is largely driven by secondary particulate matter formed through complex atmospheric chemistry, with ammonia emerging as a critical enabler. Effective mitigation therefore requires coordinated, multi-sectoral strategies beyond conventional pollution control measures.

UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper II: Environmental governance, role of statutory bodies, Supreme Court interventions.
- GS Paper III: Air pollution, source apportionment, agriculture-environment linkage, sustainable development.



- Essay and Prelims: Concept of secondary pollutants, ammonia role, Delhi-NCR air quality management.

4. Trump, Greenland and NATO: Strategic Strain on the Trans-Atlantic Alliance

Key Takeaways

- NATO was created in 1949 as a collective security alliance against Soviet expansion, anchored in Article 5 of the Washington Treaty.
- Donald Trump's core grievance with NATO is burden-sharing, arguing the US pays disproportionately for European security.
- Trump's renewed demand to raise defence spending from 2% to 5% of GDP has intensified trans-Atlantic tensions.
- Greenland emerged as a strategic flashpoint, symbolizing US expectations of geopolitical returns for NATO spending.
- Any coercive move against Denmark over Greenland would undermine NATO's unity and credibility.
- The episode risks setting a dangerous global precedent, indirectly benefiting Russia and China.



Background: Creation and Evolution of NATO

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was founded in 1949 by 12 countries including the US, UK, Canada, France and others to deter Soviet communism.
- Article 5 of the Washington Treaty states that an armed attack against one member is considered an attack against all.
- After the Cold War, NATO expanded eastward; Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024) joined following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
- Article 5 was invoked only once, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the US.

Trump's Gripe with NATO (Definition and Context)

- Multilateralism refers to cooperation among multiple states to manage shared security and economic challenges.
- Trump has consistently criticized multilateral institutions, viewing them as unfair to US interests.
- He argues that European NATO members free-ride on US military spending while investing inadequately in defence.
- Greenland, in this context, was framed by Trump as strategic compensation for decades of US security guarantees.

Why Greenland Matters Strategically

- Greenland, an autonomous territory of Denmark, holds critical Arctic and North Atlantic strategic value.



- The US maintains military infrastructure in Greenland, vital for missile defense and Arctic surveillance.
- A hostile or coercive US action toward Denmark would imply one NATO member threatening another, effectively nullifying the alliance's foundation.
- Europe remains dependent on the US nuclear umbrella despite the UK and France possessing nuclear weapons.

Dangerous Precedent for Global Order

- Any transfer of Greenland under pressure would violate Denmark's sovereignty, a core principle of international law.
- It weakens moral authority of the West in opposing Russia's actions in Ukraine or China's pressure on Taiwan.
- The perception of alliance fragility emboldens revisionist powers like Russia and China.

Trump's Davos Pitch and Tactical Retreat

- At the Davos World Economic Forum, Trump clarified he would not annex Greenland by force.
- He avoided immediate punitive tariffs but issued a veiled warning implying long-term consequences for refusal.
- His stance suggested coercive diplomacy rather than outright military aggression, keeping NATO intact but strained.

Constitutional and Legal Dimensions

- NATO operates under international treaty law, primarily the Washington Treaty, binding member states to collective defense.
- Sovereignty and territorial integrity are core principles under the UN Charter.
- Any coercion against an ally contradicts customary international law and alliance norms.

Conclusion

The Greenland episode highlights how transactional diplomacy and unilateral pressure can destabilize even long-standing alliances like NATO. While the alliance survived the immediate crisis, the episode exposed structural vulnerabilities in trans-Atlantic trust and collective security.

UPSC Relevance

- GS PaperII: International relations, alliances, India's approach to multilateralism.
- GS PaperIII: Global security architecture, emerging geopolitical fault lines.
- Essay and Prelims: NATO, Article5, Arctic geopolitics, sovereignty and international law.

5. Higher Allocation for Power Distribution Reforms under RDSS

Key Takeaways

- Government is considering raising allocation for the Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (RDSS) to ₹18,000crore in FY27 from about ₹16,000crore in FY26.



- RDSS focuses on improving efficiency and financial sustainability of power distribution companies through smart metering and structural reforms.
- Smart meter deployment is gaining momentum, with nearly 1.5lakh meters installed per month, requiring higher capital support.
- Power discoms continue to face severe financial stress with cumulative debt exceeding ₹7trillion.
- Complementary reforms include Electricity Amendment Bill,2025 and National Electricity Policy,2026.
- Increased funding aims to reduce AT&C losses and improve billing efficiency and consumer choice.

Background and Context

- RDSS was launched in 2021 with a total outlay of ₹3trillion to revive discom finances.
- The scheme targets installation of around 250million smart meters and other operational reforms.
- Due to slow progress, RDSS has been extended till FY28.
- Budget proposals are being evaluated ahead of the Union Budget scheduled on 1February.



What is Revamped Distribution Sector Scheme (Definition)

- RDSS is a centrally sponsored scheme aimed at strengthening power distribution infrastructure, reducing losses, and improving financial viability of discoms.
- It emphasizes smart metering, system modernization, and performance-linked financial assistance.

Role of Smart Meters (Definition and Importance)

- Smart meters are digital electricity meters that automatically measure, record, and transmit power consumption data in real time.
- They enhance billing accuracy, curb power theft, reduce aggregate technical and commercial losses, and enable prepaid billing.
- Smart meters improve cash flow and transparency for discoms through real-time monitoring.

Financial Stress of Discoms and Reform Measures

- Despite schemes like Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojana, discom debt remains unsustainable.
- Electricity Amendment Bill,2025 proposes competition in distribution, stricter performance benchmarks, and greater consumer choice.
- Draft National Electricity Policy,2026 mandates regular tariff revision and index-based automatic annual tariff adjustments.

Institutional and Policy Support Measures

- Group of Ministers has proposed incentivizing privatization of discoms to improve efficiency.
- Higher RDSS allocation improves confidence of AMISPs by ensuring timely grant payments.



- Adequate funding supports capacity building, IT systems, data analytics, and change management within discoms.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- Electricity is a Concurrent List subject under Schedule 7 of the Constitution.
- Parliament can legislate reforms through Electricity Act amendments.
- Tariff determination is guided by regulatory commissions under statutory frameworks.

Conclusion

Enhanced allocation to RDSS reflects recognition that power distribution reform is central to India's energy transition. Focus on smart metering, tariff rationalization, and institutional reforms is critical to restoring financial health of discoms and ensuring reliable power supply.

UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper II: Governance, regulatory reforms, Centre-State relations in power sector.
- GS Paper III: Infrastructure, energy sector reforms, fiscal sustainability.
- Prelims and Essay: Smart meters, discom reforms, RDSS, Electricity Amendment Bill.

6. India's Green Energy Push: Inviting Global Investment at WEF

Key Takeaways

- Union Minister Pralhad Joshi invited global investors to participate in India's renewable energy sector at WEF2026, Davos.
- India was projected as a stable, policy-consistent, and future-ready destination for clean energy investment.
- The outreach aligns with India's long-term commitment to energy transition and climate action.
- Renewable energy is positioned as a key driver of economic growth, energy security, and job creation.
- India seeks international capital, technology, and expertise to accelerate green energy deployment.
- The initiative strengthens India's leadership role in global climate governance.

Background and Context

- The World Economic Forum at Davos serves as a major platform for global economic and investment dialogue.
- India has consistently used multilateral forums to attract foreign direct investment in strategic sectors.
- Clean energy has emerged as a priority area under India's development and climate strategy.



Renewable Energy Sector in India (Definition and Scope)

- Renewable energy refers to energy derived from naturally replenished sources such as solar, wind, hydro, biomass, and green hydrogen.



- India is among the world's largest renewable energy markets, with ambitious capacity addition targets.
- Policy stability and scale make India attractive for long-term infrastructure investment.

Policy and Institutional Framework

- Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is the nodal agency for renewable energy development.
- Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris Agreement guide India's clean energy expansion.
- Schemes such as production-linked incentives and green hydrogen mission support investor confidence.

Economic and Strategic Significance

- Clean energy investment reduces import dependence on fossil fuels and improves energy security.
- It supports India's goal of sustainable growth while balancing development needs.
- International collaboration enables access to advanced technologies and finance at lower cost.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- Article 48A directs the State to protect and improve the environment.
- Article 21, as interpreted by courts, includes the right to a clean and healthy environment.
- Energy policies operate within statutory frameworks governing electricity and environmental regulation.

Conclusion

India's pitch at WEF2026 reflects a strategic effort to position the country as a global hub for green energy investment. By combining policy certainty, scale, and sustainability goals, India aims to mobilize global capital for its clean energy transition.

UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper II: International cooperation, climate diplomacy, investment promotion.
- GS Paper III: Renewable energy, infrastructure, sustainable development.
- Essay and Prelims: Green energy transition, India at WEF, climate commitments.

7. Liquidity Management Ahead of MPC Meet: Banks and Economists' View

Key Takeaways

- Ahead of the MPC meeting scheduled for 4-6 February, banks and economists urged the central bank to prioritize easing liquidity rather than cutting policy rates.
- With growth and inflation assessed as largely stable, there is little appetite in markets for another rate cut after the recent 25bps reduction.
- System liquidity remains in deficit, estimated at about ₹60,000 crore as of 21 January.
- Persistent forex market intervention, strong credit growth, and advance tax outflows are key drivers of liquidity tightness.



- Market participants prefer durable liquidity infusion tools over short-term measures.
- Open Market Operations and dollar buy-sell swaps emerged as the most favored instruments.

Background and Context

- The pre-policy interaction was held by the Reserve Bank of India with economists and treasury officials.
- This MPC meeting is the last of the current financial year, raising expectations of balance-sheet oriented actions rather than rate signaling.
- Liquidity conditions have become central to monetary transmission and credit flow.

Key Concepts and Definitions

- Liquidity refers to the availability of surplus funds in the banking system to meet short-term obligations and support credit growth.
- Monetary Policy Committee is the statutory body responsible for setting policy rates under the RBI Act, 1934.
- Open Market Operations are RBI purchases or sales of government securities to inject or absorb rupee liquidity.
- Dollar buy-sell swaps involve RBI buying dollars spot and selling them forward to inject rupee liquidity while managing forex volatility.



Preferred Policy Instruments and Rationale

- Continued OMOs were supported to provide durable rupee liquidity, though concerns were raised over banks' limited ability to sell bonds due to Liquidity Coverage Ratio norms.
- Dollar buy-sell swaps were viewed as flexible tools to address both rupee liquidity and dollar funding stress.
- Variable-rate repo operations were seen as short-term tools, insufficient to address structural liquidity deficit.
- Some participants suggested an indicative OMO calendar up to ₹5 trillion to improve predictability and market confidence.

Regulatory and Legal Framework

- RBI derives its monetary policy mandate from the RBI Act, 1934, as amended to constitute the MPC.
- Liquidity management forms a core part of RBI's objective to maintain price stability while supporting growth.
- Prudential norms such as Liquidity Coverage Ratio are prescribed under banking regulation to ensure resilience.

Conclusion

The emerging consensus ahead of the MPC meeting indicates a shift from rate-centric expectations to balance-sheet based liquidity management. Durable liquidity infusion through OMOs and forex swaps is seen as critical to sustaining credit growth and effective policy transmission.



UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper III: Monetary policy, liquidity management, banking sector regulation.
- Prelims: OMOs, MPC, LCR, dollar buy-sell swaps.
- Essay: Role of central banking tools beyond interest rates in macroeconomic stability.

8. Himalayan Ecological Fragility, Climate Extremes and Unsustainable Infrastructure

Key Takeaways

- In 2025, India witnessed nearly 331 days of climate impacts, with over 4,000 climate-related deaths, heavily concentrated in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
- Cloudbursts, landslides, avalanches and flash floods have become frequent, indicating climate change as a risk multiplier in the Himalayas.
- Despite recent disasters, large-scale infrastructure projects like Char Dham road widening continue in highly vulnerable zones.
- Felling of nearly 7,000 Devdar trees undermines slope stability, water security and disaster resilience.
- Unsafe land use and flawed engineering, not lack of retrofitting, are the primary drivers of Himalayan disasters.
- Development choices increasingly contradict India's own climate and mountain ecosystem policies.

Background and Context

- Towns such as Dharali, Harsil, Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Kullu, Mandi and Kishtwar faced repeated disasters in 2025.
- The Himalayan region is warming about 50% faster than the global average, intensifying extreme events.
- Infrastructure expansion is being pursued in geologically fragile and climate-sensitive zones.



Devdar Forests and Ecological Significance (Definition)

- Devdar (Deodar) forests are high-altitude Himalayan coniferous forests with deep root systems that stabilize slopes.
- They act as natural barriers against landslides, avalanches and glacial debris flows.
- These forests regulate microclimate, maintain stream temperature, dissolved oxygen and river ecology.
- Their antimicrobial properties support the ecological health of the Ganga's upper reaches.

Infrastructure Push and Environmental Concerns

- 43 hectares of forest land were diverted for Char Dham road widening, including muck dumping areas.
- The adoption of DL-PS road standards with 12-metre paved width ignores geological vulnerability.



- Vertical hill cutting violates the natural angle of repose, triggering slope instability.
- Over 800 active landslide zones have emerged along nearly 700km of widened roads.

Policy and Governance Failures

- The project bypassed comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment through fragmentation.
- It contradicts the objectives of the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem, approved in 2014.
- Warnings by experts, courts and oversight bodies have not been adequately incorporated.
- Disaster resilience has been subordinated to short-term connectivity and economic goals.

Climate Change as a Risk Multiplier (Definition)

- Risk multiplier refers to climate change intensifying existing vulnerabilities rather than acting alone.
- Erratic rainfall, rapid glacial melt and snowless winters increase runoff and flash flood risk.
- This water peak phase is followed by long-term water scarcity and drought.

Legal and Constitutional Dimensions

- Article 21 includes the right to a clean and safe environment as part of the right to life.
- Article 48A directs the State to protect and improve the environment.
- The Supreme Court has discouraged felling of old-growth Devdar forests in fragile zones.
- The National Green Tribunal has repeatedly flagged unsafe land use in the Himalayas.

Conclusion

The Himalayan crisis reflects a convergence of climate change and governance failure. Unsustainable infrastructure, deforestation and flawed engineering have converted natural hazards into human disasters. Disaster resilience, ecological integrity and scientific planning must override disaster-prone development in the Himalayas.

UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper I: Geography, Himalayas, climate change impacts.
- GS Paper III: Disaster management, environmental conservation, sustainable infrastructure.
- GS Paper II: Environmental governance, judicial interventions.
- Essay: Development versus environment, climate resilience, Himalayan ecology.

9. BRICS Summit in India: Advancing a Green and Resilient Global South Agenda

Key Takeaways

- India will host the next BRICS Summit in 2026, providing an opportunity to shape the agenda around climate resilience and sustainable development.
- Climate change disproportionately impacts the Global South, making resilience, adaptation and equity central collective priorities.
- In a polarized global order with weakening multilateralism, BRICS can act as a stabilising force on climate cooperation.



- BRICS countries together represent nearly half of the global population, about 40% of global GDP and 26% of global trade, giving them substantial global leverage.
- Climate finance remains the key enabler for action, requiring engagement beyond the New Development Bank.
- India's leadership can balance strategic autonomy, Global South interests and geopolitical sensitivities.

Background and Context

- India has recent experience of managing complex global diplomacy after successfully hosting the G20 Summit in 2023.
- The BRICS grouping has expanded to include major developing economies, increasing its representativeness and influence.
- Global climate governance faces uncertainty due to reduced commitment by some developed countries.

Need for a Stabilising Multilateral Force

- The current geopolitical environment has placed collaborative multilateralism under strain, particularly on climate change.
- Reduced participation by some major powers has created space for alternative leadership coalitions.
- BRICS can provide continuity and momentum to global sustainability and resilience efforts.

Climate Change as a Shared BRICS Concern (Definition)

- Climate resilience refers to the capacity of societies, economies and ecosystems to withstand, adapt to and recover from climate impacts.
- BRICS countries face diverse but interconnected climate risks including glacier melt, sea-level rise, extreme heat, floods and ecosystem degradation.
- Collective action enhances negotiating strength on adaptation, finance and technology transfer.

Institutional and Diplomatic Frameworks

- Platforms such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change remain central, with developing country coalitions playing a key role.
- The BASIC grouping has historically coordinated positions, but an expanded BRICS provides broader legitimacy.
- Past leadership by BRICS members at climate conferences has helped sustain post-Paris Agreement momentum.

Climate Finance and Global Institutions

- Climate finance is essential for mitigation, adaptation and resilience in developing countries.
- The BRICS Leaders' Framework Declaration on Climate Finance adopted in 2025 highlighted Global South demands.
- Engagement with institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund is necessary for scaling finance.



- Addressing unilateral trade measures linked to climate, such as carbon-related barriers, is also critical.

India's Strategic Opportunity

- As BRICS chair, India can position resilience-focused green development as a unifying theme.
- This approach aligns with India's domestic priorities and its global image as a voice of the Global South.
- It also balances geopolitical competition by preventing dominance of any single power in setting the global green agenda.

Constitutional and Legal Dimensions

- Article 48A of the Constitution directs the State to protect and improve the environment.
- Article 21 has been judicially interpreted to include the right to a healthy environment.
- International environmental commitments guide India's external engagement while preserving strategic autonomy.

Conclusion

The upcoming BRICS Summit in India offers a critical platform to advance a collective, resilience-driven green agenda for the Global South. In a fragmented global order, India-led BRICS action can reinforce climate cooperation, equity and sustainable development while strengthening India's diplomatic leadership.

UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper II: International relations, multilateral groupings, Global South leadership.
- GS Paper III: Climate change, sustainable development, climate finance.
- Essay: Reforming global governance, climate resilience and development pathways.

10. Great Nicobar Project and Tribal Land Rights: Development versus Indigenous Consent

Key Takeaways

- Tribal Council members of Great and Little Nicobar allege coercion by district officials to surrender ancestral lands for the Great Nicobar Island mega infrastructure project.
- The ₹92,000 crore project requires diversion of forest land in Galathea Bay, Pemmaya Bay and Nanjappa Bay, traditionally inhabited by Nicobarese tribals.
- Tribal representatives claim they were asked to sign a "surrender certificate" without clarity on scope or consequences.
- Nicobarese communities displaced by the 2004 tsunami are yet to be rehabilitated to their original village sites.
- The issue raises concerns over consent, land rights and protection of Scheduled Tribes.





- The controversy highlights tensions between strategic infrastructure development and constitutional safeguards for indigenous peoples.

Background and Context

- The Great Nicobar Island mega project includes port, airport and related infrastructure components.
- Parts of the project fall within forest areas used by indigenous Nicobarese communities before the 2004 tsunami.
- The Tribal Council is the apex representative body of the Nicobarese, a notified Scheduled Tribe.

Who are the Nicobarese (Definition)

- Nicobarese are indigenous tribal communities inhabiting the Nicobar Islands.
- They are recognized as Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution, entitled to special protections over land and culture.
- Ancestral land forms the basis of their livelihood, identity and intergenerational security.

Ancestral Land and Surrender Certificate (Definition)

- Ancestral land refers to land traditionally owned, occupied or used by tribal communities across generations.
- A surrender certificate implies voluntary relinquishment of land rights, which must be informed, consensual and legally valid.
- Allegations of coercion undermine the principle of free, prior and informed consent.

Legal and Constitutional Provisions Involved

- Article 21 protects the right to life, including livelihood and dignity.
- Article 244 and the Fifth Schedule mandate protection of tribal land and governance in Scheduled Areas.
- Forest Rights Act, 2006 recognizes forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes' rights over ancestral lands.
- Supreme Court jurisprudence emphasizes consent of Gram Sabha or representative tribal bodies before land diversion.
- Administrative pressure to surrender land may violate statutory and constitutional safeguards.

Governance and Ethical Concerns

- Lack of transparency regarding land extent and terms of surrender raises procedural questions.
- Continued displacement since 2004 without rehabilitation reflects governance gaps.
- Development projects in ecologically and culturally sensitive areas require heightened scrutiny.

Geographical and Strategic Context

- Great Nicobar Island is ecologically fragile and strategically significant.
- Infrastructure development here has national security implications but also high social and environmental costs.



Conclusion

The Great Nicobar controversy underscores the need to balance strategic development with constitutional morality and tribal justice. Coercive land acquisition, if proven, erodes trust and violates the spirit of protective laws meant for indigenous communities.

UPSC Relevance

- GS PaperII: Tribal rights, governance, constitutional safeguards.
- GS PaperIII: Infrastructure development, environment, displacement.
- Essay: Development versus rights of indigenous communities, inclusive growth.

11. Drug Quality Surveillance in India: CDSCO December Alert

Key Takeaways

- A total of 167 drug samples were flagged for quality lapses in December during routine regulatory surveillance.
- Central Drug Laboratories identified 74 samples as Not of Standard Quality (NSQ).
- State drug testing laboratories flagged 93 additional samples failing prescribed quality standards.
- Details of NSQ and spurious drugs are publicly disclosed on the CDSCO portal to ensure transparency.
- The Ministry clarified that failures are batch-specific and do not imply market-wide quality concerns.
- Regular drug alerts strengthen pharmacovigilance and consumer safety.

Background and Context

- The monthly drug alert is part of India's regulatory oversight to ensure medicines meet statutory quality standards.
- Surveillance includes testing of samples drawn from manufacturing sites and market supply chains.
- Public disclosure aims to enable timely corrective action by manufacturers and regulators.



Key Definitions

- Not of Standard Quality (NSQ) drugs are medicines that do not meet specifications prescribed under pharmacopeial or regulatory standards.
- Spurious drugs are falsely labeled or misrepresented products, posing significant public health risks.
- Drug alert refers to official notification issued after laboratory testing flags quality deviations.

Institutional Framework

- Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation is the apex regulatory authority for drugs and medical devices.
- Central Drug Laboratories and State Drug Testing Laboratories conduct sampling and analysis.
- Findings are coordinated with State Drug Controllers for enforcement actions.



Legal and Regulatory Provisions

- Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules, 1945 govern manufacture, sale and quality control of drugs.
- Regulators are empowered to recall batches, suspend licenses and initiate prosecutions for violations.
- Transparency through public disclosure aligns with principles of consumer protection and public health.

Public Health and Governance Implications

- Batch-specific failures indicate localized manufacturing or handling issues rather than systemic collapse.
- Regular testing deters non-compliance and incentivizes quality assurance across the pharmaceutical supply chain.
- Timely alerts help healthcare providers and consumers avoid substandard medicines.

Conclusion

The December drug alert reflects an active and transparent regulatory ecosystem focused on safeguarding medicine quality. Batch-specific NSQ findings, coupled with public disclosure and enforcement, reinforce trust while ensuring corrective action without causing undue alarm.

UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper II: Governance, regulatory institutions, public health administration.
- GS Paper III: Pharmaceutical sector, quality control, consumer safety.
- Prelims: CDSCO, NSQ drugs, Drugs and Cosmetics Act.