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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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1. SC on Constitutional Morality: Leaders Must Foster Fraternity

The Supreme Court of India, while hearing a petition regarding hate speech by high-ranking officials, emphasized that political leaders and constitutional functionaries bear a primary responsibility to uphold the spirit of fraternity. The Bench, led by Chief Justice Surya Kant, noted that public statements stigmatizing communities erode the state's commitment to equal citizenship and legitimise discriminatory governance.

- **Upholding Fraternity:** The Court highlighted that "Fraternity" is not just a word in the Preamble but a foundational duty of leaders to ensure social cohesion and mutual respect among citizens.
- **Constitutional Morality over Political Rhetoric:** The Bench urged political parties to adhere to constitutional morality, noting that in a mature democracy of 75 years, "toxic" rhetoric from state authorities is unacceptable.
- **Impact on Governance:** The Court expressed concern that derogatory speech by Chief Ministers and bureaucrats "normalizes" exclusion and influences law enforcement, leading to perceived institutional bias.
- **Restraint and Thought:** While Justice B.V. Nagarathna noted the difficulty in controlling "thought," the Court acknowledged that the "consequences of thought" (speech) can and should be regulated through guidelines for public office holders.
- **Institutional Integrity:** The judiciary warned against the "political thicket" but maintained that holders of high office are not "ordinary speakers" and their words carry the weight of state authority, requiring higher accountability.

Key Definitions

- **Fraternity:** A sense of common brotherhood among all Indians, transcending individual differences, to ensure the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation.
- **Constitutional Morality:** Adherence to the core principles of the Constitution (like justice, liberty, equality) rather than just its legalistic forms; it involves a commitment to democratic norms and the rule of law.
- **Prior Restraint:** Judicial or government action that prohibits speech or other expression before it can take place.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Preamble:** Explicitly mentions "Fraternity" as a core objective to ensure the dignity of the individual.
- **Article 19(2):** Provides "reasonable restrictions" on the freedom of speech, including grounds of public order, decency, and incitement to an offence.
- **Article 51A(e):** Fundamental Duty of every citizen to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1951:** Section 123(3) and 125 classify promoting enmity between classes on grounds of religion, race, caste, or community during elections as a "corrupt practice."



- **Indian Penal Code (IPC) / BNS:** Provisions like Section 153A and 505 (now under relevant Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita sections) criminalize speech that promotes enmity or affects public tranquility.

Additional Key Points for Examination

- **Kaushal Kishore Case (2023):** A Constitution Bench previously ruled that a Minister's statement cannot be vicariously attributed to the Government, but a Minister's freedom of speech can be restricted if it violates the constitutional rights of a citizen.
- **The "Duty of Care":** Public officials owe a higher duty of care to ensure their speech does not trigger communal disharmony or infringe upon the Article 21 rights (Right to Life and Dignity) of marginalized groups.
- **The Political Thicket Doctrine:** The judiciary generally avoids intervening in purely political disputes, but when political speech infringes on fundamental rights or constitutional values, judicial review is triggered.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's observations underscore that the health of a democracy depends not just on the letter of the law, but on the conduct of those who administer it. When high-ranking officials engage in divisive rhetoric, it weakens the social contract. To preserve the "unity and integrity of the nation," it is imperative to bridge the gap between political strategy and constitutional ethics through enforceable guidelines for public discourse.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies; Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability.
- **General Studies IV (Ethics):** Ethics in public administration; status and ethical problems in government and private institutions; Strengthening of ethical and moral values in governance.
- **Essay Paper:** Themes related to Democracy, Fraternity, and the role of leadership in nation-building.

2. India-France Relations: Special Global Strategic Partnership

The bilateral relationship between India and France has been elevated to a 'Special Global Strategic Partnership' following the high-level meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron. Positioned as a "force for stability" in an era of global uncertainty, the partnership now spans across traditional defense cooperation to new-age sectors like critical minerals and green energy.

- **Elevated Partnership Status:** The transition to a 'Special Global Strategic Partnership' signifies a deeper level of trust and alignment on global governance, moving beyond buyer-seller dynamics to co-development.
- **Reciprocal Logistics in Defense:** A landmark agreement on the reciprocal deployment of armed forces was reached, enhancing interoperability and allowing both nations to utilize each other's military facilities for logistics.
- **Institutionalized Oversight:** To ensure the steady progress of the 'Horizon 2047 Roadmap,' an annual Foreign Ministers' Dialogue has been established to provide a structured review mechanism.



- **Economic and Fiscal Reforms:** Both nations amended the protocol on the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) to facilitate smoother cross-border investments and reduce tax-related hurdles for businesses.
- **Diverse Sectoral Cooperation:** The talks yielded comprehensive agreements in health, critical minerals (essential for the green transition), renewable energy, and science and technology, reflecting a multi-dimensional approach.
- **Anti-Hegemonic World Order:** Both leaders emphasized a shared commitment to a multipolar world based on the rule of law, explicitly stating their intent to create a path free from the dominance of any single power (hegemony).



Key Definitions

- **Special Global Strategic Partnership:** A high-level diplomatic classification indicating that two nations share a long-term, multi-sectoral vision with a high degree of mutual trust on global security and economic issues.
- **Horizon 2047 Roadmap:** A comprehensive bilateral document charting the course of India-France relations over the next 25 years, marking the centenary of India's independence and 50 years of the strategic partnership.
- **Reciprocal Deployment:** An arrangement where the military forces of one country can be stationed or utilize the infrastructure of the other for joint exercises, refueling, or logistical support.
- **Hegemony:** The political, economic, or military predominance or control of one state over others.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- **Article 51:** Part of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) in the Indian Constitution, it mandates the State to promote international peace, security, and maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
- **Article 73:** Extends the executive power of the Union to matters with respect to which Parliament has the power to make laws, including the power to enter into treaties and agreements with foreign countries.
- **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA):** A tax treaty signed between two countries to help taxpayers avoid paying double taxes on the same income earned in both countries.

Additional Strategic Dimensions

- **Indo-Pacific Synergy:** France, as a resident power in the Indian Ocean (due to territories like Réunion Island), is India's most reliable partner in ensuring a "Free, Open, and Inclusive Indo-Pacific."
- **Strategic Autonomy:** Both India and France value 'Strategic Autonomy,' preferring to make independent foreign policy choices rather than being restricted by rigid bloc-based alliances.
- **Nuclear and Space Collaboration:** France was one of the few Western nations not to impose sanctions on India after the 1998 nuclear tests and remains a key partner in the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project and ISRO-CNES space missions.



- **Defense Indigenization:** Moving toward 'Atmanirbhar Bharat,' the partnership is shifting from off-the-shelf purchases (like Rafale) to joint production and technology transfer in jet engines and submarines.

Conclusion

The India-France relationship has evolved into one of the most resilient and reliable strategic equations in modern diplomacy. By addressing 21st-century challenges—ranging from supply chain resilience in critical minerals to maritime security in the Indo-Pacific—the "Special Global Strategic Partnership" serves as a stabilizing anchor in a fragmented global order. The commitment to a non-hegemonic world ensures that both nations remain masters of their own destiny while collaborating for global good.

UPSC Relevance

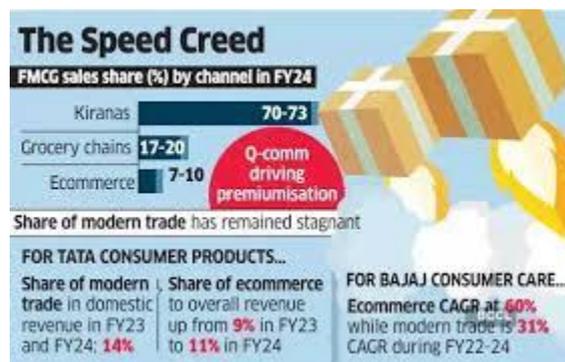
- **General Studies II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **General Studies III:** Internal Security; Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.
- **Current Affairs:** Strategic partnerships, defense acquisitions, and international treaties.

3. Rise of Quick Commerce in India's FMCG Sector

The Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector is witnessing a structural shift as Quick Commerce (q-comm) evolves from a niche convenience service into a mainstream distribution powerhouse. Historically reliant on "Kirana" stores (General Trade), legacy players like HUL, Marico, and Tata Consumer are now recalibrating their supply chains to serve the hyper-local, 10-minute delivery market.

Key Summary Points

- **Strategic Revenue Shift:** Q-comm now contributes significantly to the growth of legacy giants; for instance, it accounts for nearly 20% of Emami's e-commerce business and around ₹1,800 crore of HUL's annual revenue.
- **Rapid Market Penetration:** The sector is projected to grow at a CAGR of 37-39% between 2025 and 2030, potentially reaching a market value of ₹5.8 trillion.
- **Urban Consumer Dominance:** The model thrives on high-density urban clusters, catering to 51 million monthly transacting users (as of 2025) who prioritize speed for staples and impulse purchases.
- **Portfolio Diversification:** Beyond daily essentials, FMCG firms are using q-comm to scale high-margin "Direct-to-Consumer" (D2C) brands in premium personal care and health foods.
- **Operational Overhaul:** To succeed, companies are moving away from traditional warehousing toward "Dark Store" optimization and focused teams to manage real-time inventory.
- **Capital Intensity and Barriers:** The model's high infrastructure costs favor established FMCG players with deep pockets, creating a competitive advantage over smaller, regional competitors.





Definitions of Key Terms

- **Quick Commerce (Q-Comm):** A subset of e-commerce focused on ultra-fast delivery (typically under 30 minutes) of small quantities of goods, facilitated by local "dark stores."
- **Dark Stores:** Micro-fulfillment centers located in high-demand urban areas that are not open to the public and serve exclusively as hubs for online order picking.
- **General Trade (GT):** The traditional retail channel in India, consisting of neighborhood Kirana stores and small independent retailers.
- **SKU (Stock Keeping Unit):** A unique identifier for each distinct product and service that can be purchased, used by firms to track inventory.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules, 2020:** Governs the responsibilities of e-commerce entities, ensuring transparency in pricing, expiry dates, and country of origin.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Policy:** FDI in multi-brand retail is restricted, but 100% FDI is permitted in the marketplace model of e-commerce, which most q-comm players utilize.
- **Competition Act, 2002:** Relevant in monitoring "predatory pricing" or "deep discounting" practices that might arise as q-comm platforms compete with traditional brick-and-mortar stores.
- **Legal Metrology (Packaged Commodities) Rules:** Mandates that all pre-packaged commodities sold via e-commerce must display essential declarations like MRP and net quantity.

Additional Key Points

- **Impact on Kirana Stores:** While q-comm is growing, it is unlikely to fully replace General Trade, which still holds the lion's share of rural and semi-urban Indian retail.
- **Sustainability Concerns:** The rapid delivery model increases the carbon footprint due to frequent small-batch deliveries and high packaging waste.
- **Employment Generation:** The sector is a massive driver of gig economy jobs, specifically for delivery partners, though labor welfare remains a point of debate.

Conclusion

Quick commerce has transitioned from a pandemic-era luxury to a fundamental pillar of India's retail architecture. For FMCG companies, it represents a "high-velocity" channel that captures the impulsive and time-poor urban consumer. However, the long-term viability of the sector will depend on balancing capital-intensive logistics with sustainable profitability and ensuring fair competition with traditional retail ecosystems.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors (E-commerce regulations and FDI policy).
- **General Studies III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, and growth; Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.
- **Mains Perspective:** Analyze the impact of the gig economy and rapid urbanization on India's retail landscape and the socio-economic implications for traditional small-scale traders.



4. India-UAE Strategic Partnership: Doubling Trade to \$200 Billion

The bilateral relationship between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has entered a "Golden Era," moving from a traditional energy-buyer relationship to a multi-dimensional Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. With the success of the 2022 Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), trade hit the \$100 billion milestone five years ahead of schedule, prompting both nations to double their target to \$200 billion by 2032.

Key Summary Points

- **Accelerated Trade Targets:** India and the UAE have officially set a goal to reach \$200 billion in bilateral trade by 2032, buoyed by the fact that the previous \$100 billion target was achieved in FY2024-25, much earlier than the 2030 deadline.
- **Shift from Trade to Co-Investment:** The partnership is evolving from a commodity-exchange model to "co-innovation and co-investment," focusing on high-tech sectors like Artificial Intelligence (AI), aerospace, and advanced manufacturing.
- **Strategic Energy Security:** A landmark 10-year pact for the supply of 0.5 million tonnes of LNG annually starting in 2028 secures India's long-term energy needs and supports its goal of increasing natural gas in its energy mix to 15%.
- **Infrastructure and Aviation Hubs:** There is a growing focus on developing "aero-cities" and Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) hubs in India, leveraging UAE's capital and connectivity with India's engineering talent.
- **Digital and Fintech Integration:** Both nations are integrating digital payment systems (UPI-AANI and RuPay-JAYWAN) and exploring "Digital Embassies" to ensure sovereign data storage and seamless cross-border remittances.
- **MSME Empowerment:** Initiatives like "Bharat Mart" in Dubai (a 2.7 million sq. ft. hub) and the "Virtual Trade Corridor" are designed to provide Indian small businesses direct access to markets in West Asia, Africa, and Eurasia.



Definitions of Key Terms

- **CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement):** A deep free-trade agreement that covers trade in goods and services, and includes pillars on investment, IPR, and government procurement.
- **Local Currency Settlement System (LCSS):** A framework allowing exporters and importers to invoice and pay in INR (Rupee) and AED (Dirham), reducing dependence on third-party currencies like the US Dollar.
- **Digital Embassies:** A concept where sovereign data of one country is stored in a secure, physically separate facility within another country, governed by the laws of the data-owning nation.
- **MRO (Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul):** Specialized engineering services for the aviation sector; developing these hubs in India aims to reduce the cost of aircraft maintenance for domestic airlines.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles):** Directs the State to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations, forming the bedrock of India's foreign policy.
- **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) 2024:** A legal framework signed to provide protection to investors and ensure a stable regulatory environment for capital flows between the two countries.
- **SHANTI Act 2025:** Indian legislation that facilitates civil nuclear cooperation and private participation, enabling joint ventures with the UAE in Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).
- **Consumer Protection (E-Commerce) Rules 2020:** Relevant for the burgeoning digital trade and the "Virtual Trade Corridor" mentioned in the bilateral agreements.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **The Diaspora Factor:** Approximately 3.5 million Indians reside in the UAE, contributing nearly 18% of India's total global remittances and acting as a vital "living bridge."
- **I2U2 Grouping:** India and the UAE are founding members of the I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE, USA), a strategic forum focused on food security, water, energy, and space.
- **IMEC Corridor:** The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor positions the UAE as a critical transit hub for Indian goods reaching European markets via a multimodal rail-and-ship link.
- **Space Cooperation:** A landmark LoI between IN-SPACe and the UAE Space Agency aims at joint satellite manufacturing and the commercialization of space technologies.

Conclusion

The India-UAE corridor has transcended the "transactional oil" phase to become a bedrock of the future global economy. By combining the UAE's capital and global connectivity with India's industrial scale and digital talent, the two nations are creating a resilient economic axis. While challenges like trade imbalances remain, the focus on "co-innovation" in AI and green energy ensures that the partnership remains future-facing and strategically autonomous.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Indian Diaspora.
- **General Studies III:** Indian Economy (Trade and Investment); Infrastructure (Aviation and Ports); Energy Security; Science and Technology (AI and Space).
- **Mains Perspective:** Examine how the "Look West" policy has transformed India's relations with the Gulf from a buyer-seller relationship to a strategic partnership. Assess the significance of CEPA in achieving India's \$1 trillion export target.

5. India-Russia Diplomatic Review: Navigating Strategic Autonomy

Amidst intensifying global geopolitical realignments, the recent meeting between Indian Ambassador Vinay Kumar and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Andrei Rudenko in Moscow underscores the resilience of the "Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership." This engagement is particularly significant following the 2026 India-US trade understanding, as New Delhi seeks to balance its burgeoning ties with Washington against its deep-rooted security and energy dependencies on Moscow.



Key Summary Points

- **Strategic Rebalancing:** The dialogue addressed the "Asia-Pacific" region (Russia's preferred terminology for the Indo-Pacific), signaling a mutual interest in preventing any single power's hegemony while navigating India's participation in the Quad.
- **The "Oil Commitment" Controversy:** The meeting served as a vital channel to manage friction caused by US claims that India has agreed to halt Russian crude imports in exchange for tariff rollbacks (from 50% to 18%).
- **Energy Security vs. Market Access:** While the US tracks India's imports via executive orders, India continues to maintain that "National Interest" is the sole guiding factor for its energy procurement, balancing discounted Russian Ural crude with high-tech US trade benefits.
- **Connectivity and Logistics:** Discussions emphasized the operationalization of the **Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor** and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) to reduce reliance on the Suez Canal.
- **Defense Sustainment:** A primary bilateral "pressing issue" remains the steady supply of spares and the delivery of the remaining S-400 missile squadrons, crucial for India's two-front deterrence strategy.
- **Bilateral Trade Trajectory:** Both nations reaffirmed their commitment to reaching \$100 billion in annual trade by 2030, even as India faces a significant trade deficit due to massive energy imports (approx. \$63.8 billion in FY25).



Definitions of Key Terms

- **Strategic Autonomy:** A foundational pillar of Indian foreign policy that allows New Delhi to make independent decisions based on national interest without being forced into alliances.
- **Asia-Pacific vs. Indo-Pacific:** While India uses "Indo-Pacific" to include the Indian Ocean, Russia uses "Asia-Pacific" to emphasize a continental and Pacific focus, often viewing the "Indo-Pacific" concept as a Western-led containment strategy.
- **Refining Loophole:** A term used by Western critics to describe the process where India imports Russian crude, refines it, and exports the finished petroleum products to Europe and the US.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (DPSP):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
- **Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics Support (RELOS):** A landmark 2025 agreement that allows the Indian Navy access to Russian Arctic and Pacific bases, mirroring the LEMOA agreement with the US.
- **Intergovernmental Commission (IRIGC):** The highest institutionalized mechanism for bilateral review, split into the Military-Technical (M&MTC) and Trade-Economic (TEC) divisions.



Additional Important Keypoints

- **The Arctic Frontier:** India is increasingly looking at the **Northern Sea Route (NSR)** for year-round access to Russian minerals and LNG, seeking "icebreaker priority" for Indian vessels.
- **Payment Mechanisms:** To bypass SWIFT sanctions, both nations are working on integrating the **Structured Financial Messaging System (SFMS)** with Russia's SPFS for Rupee-Ruble trade.
- **Joint Ventures:** Shift from buyer-seller to co-production, exemplified by the **BrahMos** missile and the manufacturing of **AK-203** rifles in Amethi.

Conclusion

The India-Russia relationship in 2026 is no longer just a "time-tested" legacy but a complex, transactional necessity. While India's economic future is increasingly tethered to the West (US/EU), its immediate security and energy stability remain dependent on Moscow. The Moscow meeting highlights India's "multi-aligned" approach—securing US market access while ensuring Russia does not pivot entirely toward a China-centric axis.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** India and its neighborhood relations; Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India and affecting India's interests (Balancing US-Russia relations).
- **General Studies III:** Energy Security; Growth and Development (Impact of trade deals on Indian economy); Science & Technology (Defense indigenization and co-production).
- **Mains Perspective:** Discuss the challenges to India's "Strategic Autonomy" in the face of the US-Russia-China triangle. Evaluate the significance of the Eastern Maritime Corridor for India's "Act East" policy.

6. RBI Strategic Interventions: Managing Bond Supply and Liquidity

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has emerged as a critical stabilizer in the sovereign debt market, absorbing approximately 47% of the Central Government's bond issuances in FY26. Amidst a massive gross borrowing programme of ₹13,65,000 crore, the central bank's aggressive Open Market Operations (OMO) reflect a strategic effort to insulate the banking system from liquidity shocks and prevent a disruptive spike in borrowing costs.

Key Summary Points

- **Systemic Liquidity Support:** The RBI injected nearly ₹6.39 lakh crore in durable liquidity through OMO purchases to counter the tightening effects of sustained government borrowing and capital outflows.
- **Yield Management:** By absorbing nearly half of the bond supply, the RBI prevented the "hardening" of yields, keeping the 10-year benchmark bond yield within a stable range of 6.30%–6.70%.
- **Credit Growth Anchoring:** Ensuring adequate liquidity in the banking system allows commercial banks to maintain credit flow to the private sector, preventing "crowding out" despite high public debt levels.





- **Countering Global Volatility:** The interventions mitigated upward pressure on domestic interest rates caused by rising global crude oil prices and fluctuations in US Treasury yields.
- **Fiscal-Monetary Coordination:** The central bank's actions are synchronized with the government's fiscal consolidation path, which targets a deficit of 4.4% of GDP for FY26.
- **Maturity Management:** The RBI's front-loaded support is also timed to manage a significant maturing of government securities worth over ₹5.47 lakh crore during the current cycle.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Open Market Operations (OMO):** The buying and selling of government securities (G-Secs) by the central bank to regulate the money supply and liquidity in the banking system.
- **Bond Yield:** The annual return an investor gets on a bond, which moves inversely to the bond's price. High yields indicate higher borrowing costs for the government.
- **Durable Liquidity:** Long-term funds injected into the system (often through OMOs) that stay for an extended period, unlike temporary liquidity provided via daily Repo auctions.
- **Gross Borrowing Programme:** The total amount a government plans to borrow from the market to fund its fiscal deficit and repay past loans.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Section 20 & 21, RBI Act, 1934:** Mandates the RBI to act as the "Banker to the Government," managing its public debt and handling its various banking requirements.
- **Section 17, RBI Act, 1934:** Empowers the RBI to engage in the purchase and sale of government securities as a tool for monetary regulation.
- **FRBM Act, 2003:** While the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act generally prohibits RBI from buying primary issuances (except under "escape clause" conditions), the RBI actively manages liquidity through the secondary market.
- **Article 292 of the Constitution:** Provides the executive power of the Union to borrow upon the security of the Consolidated Fund of India within limits set by Parliament.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Crowding Out Effect:** Large government borrowings can reduce the funds available for private investment; RBI's absorption of bonds helps mitigate this risk.
- **Impact of India-US Trade Deal:** Emerging positive capital flows from recent trade agreements may reduce the future need for aggressive OMO interventions by the RBI.
- **Monetary Policy Transmission:** Stable bond yields are essential for ensuring that RBI's policy rate changes (Repo Rate) are effectively passed on to the broader economy.

Conclusion

The RBI's massive absorption of government bonds in FY26 acts as a bridge between fiscal necessity and monetary stability. While the government navigates a high borrowing regime to fund infrastructure and development, the central bank's role in ensuring an "orderly market" prevents interest rate volatility. However, the long-term challenge remains the transition toward a market-driven demand for G-Secs, reducing the central bank's role as the primary "buyer of last resort."



UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies III:** Indian Economy (Government Budgeting, Monetary Policy, and Mobilization of Resources); Issues relating to growth and development.
- **General Studies II:** Statutory bodies (Powers and Functions of the RBI).
- **Mains Perspective:** Analyze the challenges of balancing fiscal deficit targets with the need for market liquidity. Evaluate the effectiveness of OMOs in maintaining monetary policy transmission during periods of high public debt.

7. India's Foreign Policy: Negotiating from a Position of Strength

In February 2026, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar articulated a significant shift in India's diplomatic posture, asserting that the nation now engages with global allies from a "position of strength." Speaking at the Global Economic Cooperation conference in Mumbai, he highlighted that India's economic resilience and a string of landmark trade agreements have transitioned the country from a cautious participant to a proactive shaper of the global order.

Key Summary Points

- **Shift to Proactive Diplomacy:** India has moved away from a "defensive crouch" to intensive global engagement, leveraging its status as a trusted partner in a volatile world witnessing the weaponization of production and finance.
- **Landmark Trade Pacts:** The recent reduction of US tariffs on Indian goods (from 50% to 18%) and the conclusion of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in early 2026 serve as concrete evidence of India's growing economic clout.
- **Strategic De-risking:** India's policy now focuses on "de-risking" supply chains by building national capabilities and diversifying partnerships to counter global uncertainties and tighter export controls.
- **Economic Security as Priority:** The "reform express" continues to drive foreign policy, where economic interests—specifically in technology, AI, and skilled talent—are now inextricably linked to national security.
- **Recalibrating Energy Ties:** As part of a major strategic pivot in 2026, India is balancing its traditional energy dependencies with new pacts, such as the major trade deal with the US that involves shifting energy procurement away from volatile sources.
- **Global Salience:** India is increasingly viewed as a central pillar in the global calculus of production and services, positioning itself as a "China-plus-one" alternative for global manufacturing.



Definitions of Key Words

- **Position of Strength:** A diplomatic stance where a nation uses its domestic economic stability, military capability, and internal political continuity to negotiate more favorable terms in international agreements.
- **Weaponization of Finance:** The use of financial instruments (like sanctions, access to payment gateways, or currency manipulation) as a tool of geopolitical coercion.
- **De-risking:** A strategy used by states and businesses to reduce reliance on a single source (like China) for critical goods or services to avoid supply chain disruptions.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (DPSP):** The constitutional directive for the State to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** The primary legal framework providing the government power to develop and regulate foreign trade by facilitating imports into and augmenting exports from India.
- **Section 5 of the Customs Act, 1962:** Grants the government the power to adjust duties, which is critical during the implementation of new trade deals like the India-US or India-EU FTAs.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **The "Twilight Zone" of Global Order:** Minister Jaishankar noted that the established global order is changing, and India is preparing for a "long twilight zone" where economics will frequently give way to politics and security.
- **Multi-Alignment:** Unlike the Cold War-era non-alignment, India now practices "multi-alignment"—working with multiple power blocs (Quad, BRICS, G20) simultaneously to secure its own interests.
- **Domestic Linkages:** The minister emphasized that "political continuity and stability" at home have been the bedrock allowing for bold external reforms and negotiations.

Conclusion

India's engagement from a position of strength represents a maturing of its "Strategic Autonomy." By securing favorable trade terms with both the West and emerging markets, India is successfully navigating a turbulent global landscape. The focus has clearly shifted from merely protecting borders to securing economic frontiers, ensuring that India's "reform express" remains the engine of its global aspirations.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies 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.
- **General Studies III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Effects of liberalization on the economy.
- **Mains Perspective:** Analyze the transition of Indian foreign policy from "Non-Alignment" to "Multi-Alignment." Evaluate how economic strength acts as a force multiplier for a nation's diplomatic leverage.

8. NHAI Bee Corridors: Mitigating Ecological Stress in Infrastructure

In a major shift towards sustainable infrastructure, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) announced in February 2026 the development of "Bee Corridors" along national highways. This initiative moves beyond traditional ornamental landscaping to create functional ecological arteries designed to support pollinators, enhance biodiversity, and bolster agricultural productivity in surrounding rural belts.

Key Summary Points

- **Functional Green Infrastructure:** Unlike standard roadside plantations, bee corridors consist of linear stretches of native, nectar-rich vegetation designed to provide safe passage and a continuous food supply for honeybees and other wild pollinators.



- **Strategic Plantation Design:** NHAI plans to plant clusters of flowering species at intervals of **500m–1km**, carefully aligned with the average foraging distance of bees to ensure habitat connectivity across highway stretches.
- **Selection of Native Species:** The project prioritizes indigenous flora such as **Neem, Karanj, Mahua, Palash, Jamun, and Siris**, ensuring a staggered blooming cycle to maintain nectar availability throughout the year.
- **Ecological Stress Reduction:** The corridors aim to mitigate the negative impacts of habitat fragmentation caused by road construction, which has historically isolated pollinator populations and reduced local crop yields.
- **Integration with National Goals:** Approximately **60%** of the 40 lakh trees planned for plantation in FY26–27 will be part of this pollinator-friendly initiative, marking a significant commitment to the "Green Highways" vision.
- **Agricultural Spillover:** By stabilizing bee populations, the corridors provide a critical ecosystem service to nearby farms, potentially increasing yields for cross-pollinated crops like mustard, sunflowers, and various fruits.



Definitions of Key Terms

- **Pollinator Corridor:** A dedicated linear habitat that connects fragmented areas, allowing pollinators like bees, butterflies, and birds to move safely while accessing food and nesting sites.
- **Foraging Distance:** The maximum distance a pollinator typically travels from its hive or nest to collect nectar and pollen; for honeybees, this is generally within a 1km radius.
- **Staggered Blooming:** A plantation strategy where different plant species are selected so that their flowering periods overlap or follow one another, providing a "continuous floral resource."
- **Ecological Stress:** Pressures exerted on an ecosystem or its inhabitants by human activities (like infrastructure development) that threaten the survival of species or the provision of ecosystem services.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Mandates the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duties):** Explicitly states the duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Provides the overarching legal framework for the conservation of flora and fauna; the 2022 amendment specifically emphasizes the conservation of "ecosystem services."
- **Green Highways Policy, 2015:** The foundational policy that directs **1% of the total project cost** of all highway projects toward plantation and maintenance, now evolving to include specific ecological targets like bee corridors.



Additional Important Keypoints

- **Retention of "Wild" Elements:** The initiative includes leaving dead wood, hollow trunks, and flowering weeds within the corridor to provide natural nesting habitats for solitary bees.
- **Climate Resilience:** Diverse native plantations act as better carbon sinks and are more resilient to local pests and climate fluctuations than exotic ornamental species.
- **Monitoring via Technology:** NHAI utilizes the "Bhuvan" and "GAGAN" satellite systems to monitor the survival rate of these plantations, ensuring accountability and long-term sustainability.

Conclusion

The NHAI's transition to bee corridors represents a sophisticated evolution in India's infrastructure planning. By recognizing that highways are not just transport links but parts of a larger biological landscape, India is setting a global precedent for "Pollinator-First" engineering. This model balances the urgent need for rapid connectivity with the essential requirement of preserving the natural capital that sustains Indian agriculture and biodiversity.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies III:** Environmental conservation, degradation, and environmental impact assessment; Infrastructure: Roads; Major crops and cropping patterns (Role of pollinators in food security).
- **General Studies II:** Statutory bodies (NHAI) and government policies for development in various sectors.
- **Mains Perspective:** Analyze the shift from "Grey Infrastructure" to "Green-Grey Infrastructure" in India. Discuss how such ecological initiatives can help India meet its commitments under the **Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)** and **Mission LiFE**.

9. Regulatory Framework: Proposed Social Media Restrictions for Minors

The Government of India is evaluating a significant policy shift to restrict social media access for individuals under the age of 16. This move, discussed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), aims to safeguard children from the detrimental psychological and social effects of unregulated digital exposure. Drawing inspiration from global precedents like Australia's recent legislation, the proposal seeks to balance digital inclusion with the protection of India's "demographic dividend."

Key Summary Points

- **Proposed Legal Amendment:** The Centre plans to amend the **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**, to introduce age-based access controls and restrictions for users below 16 years.
- **Shift from Consent to Access Control:** While current laws focus on data processing with parental consent, the new proposal considers a more direct restriction on account creation and content consumption for younger teens.
- **Global Precedents:** India is examining the **Australian Model** (which bans social media for under-16s) and regulations in France (under-15) and Spain to formulate a culturally and legally viable Indian framework.





- **Economic and Social Imperative:** The **Economic Survey 2025-26** flagged the rising "social and economic costs" of excessive screen time, linking it to decreased productivity and mental health challenges among India's youth.
- **Verification Challenges:** A primary focus of government-platform consultations is the implementation of robust **Age Verification Technologies** without compromising user anonymity or data privacy.
- **State-Level Momentum:** Regional authorities in Goa and Andhra Pradesh, along with judicial recommendations from the **Madras High Court**, are increasingly advocating for stringent digital protections for minors.

Definitions of Key Terms

- **Intermediary:** An entity that receives, stores, or transmits electronic records on behalf of another person, such as social media platforms (X, Instagram) and telecom providers.
- **Verifiable Parental Consent:** A legal requirement under the DPDP Act where platforms must prove they have obtained permission from a legal guardian before handling a minor's data.
- **Age-Appropriate Defaults:** Settings automatically applied to accounts of minors that maximize privacy, disable targeted advertising, and restrict high-risk features like "infinite scroll" or "autoplay."
- **Deepfakes:** Synthetic media in which a person in an existing image or video is replaced with someone else's likeness using artificial intelligence, a key concern cited by the IT Ministry.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023:** Section 9 specifically prohibits platforms from tracking or behaviorally monitoring children or directing targeted advertising toward them.
- **Article 21 (Right to Privacy):** While children have a right to privacy, the state has a "parens patriae" (parent of the nation) obligation to protect them from harm, which justifies reasonable restrictions.
- **Article 39(f) (DPSP):** Directs the State to ensure that children are given opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and protected against exploitation.
- **IT Rules, 2021:** The current regulatory framework for digital platforms, which the government intends to utilize for enforcing these new age-based mandates.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Platform Responsibility:** The government is pushing for platforms to transition from a "user-declared age" model to more rigorous verification, such as Aadhaar-linked tokens or AI-based facial age estimation.
- **Impact on EdTech:** Regulators must distinguish between "recreational" social media and "educational" digital platforms to ensure that learning outcomes are not hampered by blanket bans.
- **Digital Literacy:** Experts argue that a ban alone is insufficient and must be accompanied by "Digital Nagrik" (Digital Citizen) awareness programs in schools.

Conclusion

The proposed restriction for under-16 users marks a transition from a "laissez-faire" digital environment to a "protective-regulatory" one. While the implementation of such a ban faces technical hurdles—particularly



regarding VPNs and age-faking—the government's intent reflects a global consensus that the unchecked "platformization" of childhood requires state intervention. The success of this policy will depend on the harmony between the IT Rules and the enforcement of the DPDP Act.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation; Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections (children).
- **General Studies III:** Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in secondary security; Awareness in the fields of IT and Space.
- **Mains Perspective:** "Analyze the socio-legal challenges in implementing age-based restrictions on social media in a country with high digital disparity. Does a complete ban for under-16s infringe upon the 'Right to Information' of the youth?"

10. The Erosion of Rules-Based International Order: From Law to Might

The post-1945 global architecture, designed to restrain raw power through international law, is currently facing an existential "interregnum." As major powers pivot from multilateral cooperation to unilateral exceptionalism, the transition from a "rules-based order" to a "might is right" philosophy threatens to dissolve the foundational principles of sovereign equality and collective security.

Key Summary Points

- **Collapse of Normative Restraint:** The contemporary geopolitical mood has shifted from "hypocrisy" (violating norms while acknowledging them) to "indifference," where international law is treated as an optional tool rather than a binding commitment.
- **The Sovereignty Domino Effect:** Unilateral actions by great powers in regions like Ukraine or Venezuela set dangerous precedents, signaling to other nations that sovereignty is malleable and negotiable based on military or economic strength.
- **Retreat from Multilateralism:** The withdrawal of leading powers from international frameworks (WHO, UNESCO, Paris Agreement) creates a governance vacuum, allowing emerging powers to reshape global standards to reflect their own authoritarian or parochial preferences.
- **Paradox of Institutional Design:** The UN and associated bodies were built on a hierarchy where authority was concentrated in a few hands (P5) while responsibility was shared by all; this inherent inequality now undermines the legitimacy of the entire system.
- **Proliferation of "Grinding" Wars:** The weakening of global guardrails risks a move away from one major conflagration toward a multitude of smaller, localized conflicts that collectively erode the foundations of global peace.
- **Problems Without Passports:** Critical 21st-century challenges—including climate change, pandemics, and cyber threats—are increasingly immune to unilateral solutions, yet the capacity for collective action is at its lowest ebb.





Definitions of Key Terms

- **Rules-Based International Order (RBIO):** A set of shared beliefs, regulated by international law and institutions, that governs how states should behave and interact to maintain peace and stability.
- **Interregnum:** A period when an old system or regime has collapsed or is fading, but a new one has not yet emerged to take its place, often characterized by chaos and uncertainty.
- **Exceptionalism:** The perception or belief that a species, country, or era is "exceptional" and thus not bound by the same rules or norms that apply to others.
- **Sovereign Equality:** The principle that all states, regardless of their size or power, possess the same legal rights and obligations under international law.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 of the UN Charter:** Recognizes the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs, though often invoked selectively by great powers to justify unilateralism.
- **Article 2(4) of the UN Charter:** Strictly prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state—the cornerstone of the post-war order currently under siege.
- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution (DPSP):** Mandates that India shall strive to promote international peace, maintain just relations, and foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **Principle of Non-Intervention:** A customary international law, reinforced by the UN General Assembly Resolution 2625, which is increasingly violated in the current "might is right" era.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Middle Power Agency:** Countries like India, Brazil, and South Africa are becoming the primary stakeholders in multilateralism, as they have the most to lose in a world governed by "unmediated anarchy."
- **The "Hell vs. Heaven" Paradox:** Following Dag Hammarskjöld's view, the UN's survival is necessary not to create a utopia, but to prevent a slide into a Hobbesian state of nature where life is "nasty, brutish, and short."
- **Weaponization of Trade:** The shift from open markets to using economic dependencies as geopolitical leverage (sanctions, decoupling) is hollowing out the "open trade" pillar of the liberal order.

Conclusion

The promise of 1945—that law could tame power—is being inverted as power once again seeks to tame law. We are not witnessing an overnight collapse but a slow decay of norms. The challenge for contemporary diplomacy, particularly for emerging leaders like India, is not merely to resurrect a flawed past but to construct a new synthesis that acknowledges current power realities without abandoning the essential guardrails of international law.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Important International institutions, agencies, and fora - their structure, mandate; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.



- **Ethics (GS IV):** Ethical issues in international relations and funding; Corporate governance (moral dimensions of power).
- **Mains Perspective:** "The decline of multilateralism is not just a crisis of institutions but a crisis of faith in collective security." Critically analyze the statement in the context of recent global conflicts and India's role as a 'Vishwa Bandhu'.

11. Aviation Regulatory Reforms: Transitioning to Data-Driven Oversight

In December 2025, India's largest carrier, IndiGo, faced a severe operational collapse involving the cancellation of over 2,000 flights due to a failure to adapt to revised Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) norms. The resulting explosive surge in airfares exposed a critical regulatory gap: while India has become the world's third-largest domestic aviation market, it lacks the sophisticated, transparent data systems required for proactive market monitoring.

Key Summary Points

- **The December 2025 Crisis:** A "perfect storm" of stricter pilot rest rules (FDTL), lean manpower planning, and peak wedding season demand led to thousands of cancellations, stranding over 3 lakh passengers and triggering predatory pricing.
- **Reactive Regulatory Limits:** The Ministry of Civil Aviation was forced to invoke the *Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024* to impose emergency fare caps, highlighting a "firefighting" approach rather than steady, data-backed oversight.
- **Need for Ticket-Level Transparency:** Unlike the US Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS) which tracks ticket-level "DB1B" data, the DGCA currently only monitors aggregate passenger volumes, making it difficult to detect systematic abuse of market power.
- **The 10% Sampling Proposal:** Experts advocate for a 10% random quarterly sampling of domestic tickets (with a time delay) to create a "digital trail" of fares without exposing proprietary airline algorithms.
- **Market Concentration Risks:** With IndiGo and Air India group controlling nearly 90% of the domestic market, the lack of real-time competitive data prevents regulators from distinguishing between demand-driven spikes and anticompetitive "price gouging."
- **Promoting the "Southwest Effect":** Adopting historical pricing databases would allow researchers to identify routes needing competition, similar to how US regulators use data to prove that low-cost carrier entry reduces overall fares.



Definitions of Key Terms

- **FDTL (Flight Duty Time Limitations):** Regulatory norms that mandate maximum duty periods and minimum rest requirements for pilots to prevent fatigue-related accidents.
- **DB1B Database:** A US-based data survey that publishes ticket-level data (including fares and routes) for a 10% sample of all domestic tickets sold, used for policy planning and antitrust oversight.



- **Bharatiya Vayuyan Adhiniyam, 2024:** The new legislative framework that replaced the Aircraft Act of 1934, modernizing aviation laws and providing the government with emergency powers to regulate tariffs.
- **Predatory Pricing:** A pricing strategy where a dominant firm lowers or spikes prices in a way that harms competition or exploits a captured consumer base during crises.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 19(1)(g):** Guarantees the right to practice any profession or carry on any occupation, trade, or business, which includes airline operations, subject to "reasonable restrictions" in the interest of the general public.
- **Competition Act, 2002 (Section 4):** Prohibits the "Abuse of Dominant Position." The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is currently investigating IndiGo under this section for its conduct during the December 2025 crisis.
- **Aircraft Rules, 1937 (Rule 135):** Requires airlines to display "reasonable tariffs" on their websites, though it currently lacks the teeth for automated analytical enforcement.
- **Directive Principles (Article 38):** Directs the State to promote the welfare of the people by securing a social order in which justice—social and economic—shall inform all institutions of national life.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Pilots' Rest Rules:** The crisis was triggered by the DGCA increasing weekly rest from 36 to 48 hours and limiting night landings, a move pilots' unions argue is essential for safety despite the 15-20% reduction in pilot availability.
- **Market Hygiene:** Data transparency acts as an "electronic speed camera," encouraging airlines to build ethical guardrails into their revenue management algorithms to avoid legal and public backlash.
- **Economic Costs:** The Economic Survey 2025 highlighted that operational breakdowns in aviation impose heavy indirect costs on tourism, healthcare (missed transplant windows), and business productivity.

Conclusion

The December 2025 IndiGo crisis serves as a policy wake-up call. For India to sustain its position as a global aviation leader, the DGCA must pivot from being a mere volume-tracker to a data-driven market architect. Transitioning to a ticket-level sampling framework, modeled after the US BTS, will provide the transparency needed to protect consumers, foster competition, and move away from ad-hoc interventions toward systemic market discipline.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies (DGCA and CCI); Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.
- **General Studies III:** Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.; Effects of liberalization on the economy (Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth).
- **Mains Perspective:** "The growth of India's aviation sector has outpaced its regulatory data infrastructure." Critically examine the need for a data-first framework in regulating monopolies in the transport sector.

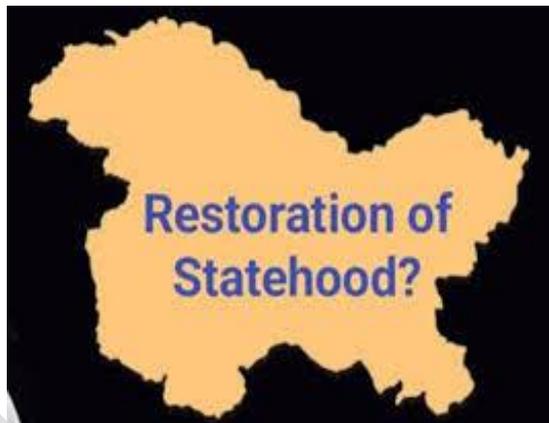


12. J&K Statehood Restoration and Access to Justice: Recent Developments

In February 2026, the discourse surrounding the political future of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) gained fresh momentum following statements by Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah in Srinagar. Central to these discussions are the restoration of statehood, the reopening of vital tourism corridors, and the expansion of digital legal services under the DISHA scheme, signaling a dual focus on political normalization and grassroots empowerment.

Key Summary Points

- **Commitment to Statehood Restoration:** The Union Government has reaffirmed its commitment to restoring statehood to J&K through a "rightful process." This follows the 2019 reorganization and the 2023 Supreme Court mandate urging restoration "as soon as possible."
- **Revival of the Tourism Economy:** The recent reopening of 14 key tourist destinations (out of 48 closed after the April 2025 Pahalgam attack) is a strategic move to revive the local economy, which suffered significant losses during the 10-month security-related closure.
- **Expansion of Tele-Law Services:** Under the DISHA scheme, the Tele-Law initiative has achieved significant scale in J&K, expanding from 2 to 20 districts and providing over 7.5 lakh legal consultations across 4,000 panchayats.
- **Pre-Litigation Dispute Resolution:** A major policy focus is utilizing digital platforms to resolve disputes at the pre-litigation stage, thereby reducing the heavy pendency burden on the J&K and Ladakh High Court and subordinate judiciary.
- **Bridge to Justice for Remote Areas:** The integration of Common Service Centres (CSCs) with legal aid systems is bridging the geographical gap for citizens in mountainous and far-flung border regions, realizing the vision of "inclusive justice."
- **Normalization and Dialogue:** The ongoing "continuous dialogue" between the elected J&K government and the Centre reflects a shift towards cooperative federalism, despite delays in the finalized timeline for statehood.



Definitions of Key Terms

- **Tele-Law:** A service that uses video conferencing and telephone facilities to connect the marginalized and those in need of legal advice with a panel of lawyers.
- **DISHA (Designing Innovative Solutions for Holistic Access to Justice):** A comprehensive central sector scheme aimed at strengthening legal literacy, awareness, and access to justice through technology and community outreach.
- **Pre-Litigation Stage:** The phase before a formal lawsuit is filed in court, where alternative dispute resolution (ADR) or legal advice can settle matters efficiently.
- **Nyaya Bandhu (Pro Bono Legal Services):** A program that connects practicing advocates with eligible registered beneficiaries to provide free legal representation and advice.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 3 (Reorganization of States):** Empowers Parliament to form new states or alter boundaries; this was the basis for the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, which transitioned the state into two Union Territories.
- **Article 39A (DPSP):** Mandates the State to provide free legal aid by suitable legislation or schemes to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.
- **Article 14 and 21:** The fundamental rights to "Equality before Law" and the "Right to Life and Personal Liberty," which implicitly include the right to a fair trial and access to justice.
- **J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019:** The legal instrument that revoked the special status of J&K; the proposed "statehood bill" would seek to amend this Act to restore the region's previous status.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Impact of the Pahalgam Attack (2025):** The terror attack in April 2025, which claimed 26 lives, necessitated a massive security audit, highlighting the fragile balance between security imperatives and economic livelihoods in the region.
- **Digital Justice Metrics:** As of early 2026, the Tele-Law portal has registered over 1.14 crore cases nationwide, with J&K emerging as a leading model for technology adoption in the justice sector.
- **The "Rightful Process" Clause:** The Centre's phrasing suggests that statehood might be linked to specific security benchmarks, the completion of delimitation-related administrative shifts, or a formal act of Parliament.

Conclusion

The convergence of the Union Law Minister and the J&K Chief Minister on a public platform in Srinagar signifies a maturing political climate. While the delay in statehood restoration remains a point of friction, the simultaneous reopening of the tourism sector and the success of digital legal initiatives like Tele-Law suggest that the administrative focus is currently on "normalcy through governance." The transition back to statehood is now a matter of "when" rather than "if," dependent on the finalization of the "rightful" legislative process.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure; Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.
- **General Studies III:** Linkages between development and spread of extremism; Internal security challenges; Role of technology in governance.
- **Mains Perspective:** "Restoration of statehood is not merely a political concession but a constitutional necessity for a healthy federal democracy." Discuss in the context of the evolving security and administrative landscape of Jammu and Kashmir.