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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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1. DGCA Reforms: Swift Bans for Unruly Air Passengers

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has proposed significant amendments to the **Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR)** to streamline the penalization of disruptive flyers. These changes aim to enhance onboard safety and operational efficiency by reducing procedural delays in imposing flying bans.

- **Direct Empowerment of Airlines:** Airline operators are proposed to be empowered to impose an immediate flying ban of up to **30 days** on unruly passengers without the current requirement of prior referral to an independent internal committee.
- **Expanded Definition of Disruptive Behavior:** The proposal broadens "unruly conduct" to include smoking, alcohol consumption on domestic flights, tampering with emergency exits, unauthorized use of life-saving gear, sloganeering, and physical disturbances like kicking seat backs.
- **Efficiency vs. Due Process:** Under existing norms, a ban can only be enforced after an independent committee reaches a decision within 45 days; the new rule allows for swift action to ensure immediate deterrence.
- **Database Management:** Airlines must maintain a dedicated database of individuals banned under this 30-day provision and report all such instances to the DGCA to ensure regulatory oversight.
- **No-Fly List Distinction:** Passengers banned under this specific 30-day "swift ban" will not be automatically included in the official National No-Fly List, which is reserved for more severe or long-term offenses.
- **Stakeholder Consultation:** The amendments are issued under **Rule 133A of the Aircraft Rules, 1937**, and the regulator has currently invited comments from stakeholders before final notification.

Aerial decorum

Under the proposed revision, airlines would be authorised to impose a flying ban not exceeding 30 days on passengers found guilty of disruptive behaviour during a flight without prior referral to the existing independent committee mechanism

Disruptive acts include:

- Consumption of alcohol on domestic flights
- Smoking on board
- Tampering with emergency exits
- Engaging in protests or sloganeering
- Unruly conduct arising from intoxication



While airlines will inform the DGCA about any flying ban imposed and maintain a database of such passengers, the ban does not add passengers to the regulator's official No Fly List

Key Definitions & Legal Provisions

- **Unruly/Disruptive Passenger:** A passenger who fails to respect the rules of conduct at an airport or on board an aircraft or fails to follow the instructions of the airport staff or crew members, thereby disturbing the good order and discipline.
- **Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR):** A set of regulations issued by the DGCA under the Aircraft Rules to ensure the safety, regularity, and efficiency of air transport.
- **Aircraft Rules, 1937:** Derived from the **Aircraft Act, 1934**, these rules provide the legal framework for the control of manufacture, possession, use, operation, sale, and even the flying of aircraft in India.
- **Rule 133A:** This specific rule empowers the Director-General to issue directions (CARs) to any person or organization to ensure the safe operation of aircraft.

Important Keypoints for Analysis

- **Safety Imperative:** A single disruptive passenger can jeopardize the safety of hundreds; hence, immediate administrative action is viewed as a "safety-first" approach.



- **Internal Committee Role:** Currently, the internal committee (headed by a retired District & Sessions Judge) acts as a quasi-judicial body. The new proposal moves toward executive discretion for short-term bans.
- **Categorization of Offenses:** Existing CARs categorize unruly behavior into three levels: Level 1 (Physical gestures/Verbal harassment), Level 2 (Physically abusive behavior), and Level 3 (Life-threatening behavior). The new proposal simplifies the initial response for immediate discipline.

Conclusion

The DGCA's proposal marks a shift from a purely deliberative disciplinary process to a more proactive, airline-centric enforcement model. While this ensures rapid response to threats on board, the balance between airline autonomy and passenger rights—specifically the prevention of arbitrary bans—remains a critical point for stakeholder feedback. Strengthening the safety protocol is essential for India's rapidly expanding aviation sector.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Statutory, regulatory, and various quasi-judicial bodies (DGCA's role and powers).
- **General Studies III:** Infrastructure (Aviation sector), Security (Onboard safety protocols), and the impact of regulatory changes on ease of travel and sector growth.
- **Governance:** Balancing executive power with the rights of citizens (Due process in administrative law).

2. Legal Recognition of Racial Slurs: Supreme Court's Stance on Hate Crimes

The Supreme Court of India recently deliberated on a petition seeking to categorize 'racial slurs' as a distinct class of hate crimes. While the Court expressed deep concern over violence against citizens from the Northeast and frontier regions, it cautioned against the "pigeonholing" of crimes based on identity, emphasizing a unified approach to criminal justice.

- **Judicial Observation on Categorization:** A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice Surya Kant observed that classifying crimes strictly based on the victim's race or region might inadvertently fuel social polarization rather than curb it.
- **The "Iron Hand" Policy:** The Court emphasized that all crimes, regardless of the identity of the perpetrator or the victim, must be dealt with an "iron hand," advocating for the strength of national unity 75 years after Independence.
- **Government Intervention:** The Court directed Attorney-General R. Venkataramani to examine the petition and refer it to the appropriate authorities for consideration under the existing or evolving legal framework.
- **Context of the Petition:** The plea was triggered by the tragic death of Anjel Chakma, a 24-year-old student from Tripura, who succumbed to injuries after a racial attack in Uttarakhand in late 2025.
- **Gaps in New Criminal Laws:** The petitioner argued that the newly enacted Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) does not sufficiently address the specific nuances of hate crimes and racial discrimination faced by citizens from the North-Eastern States.





- **Focus on Inclusivity:** The proceedings highlighted the poignant plea of the victim—"We are Indians. What certificate should we show to prove that?"—underscoring the psychological and social toll of racial exclusion.

Definitions & Key Concepts

- **Hate Crime:** Criminal acts motivated by bias or prejudice against a particular group based on race, religion, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. Unlike regular crimes, the motive is rooted in the identity of the victim.
- **Racial Slur:** A derogatory or insulting term applied to a group of people who share a common lineage or ethnicity, intended to dehumanize or marginalize them.
- **Pigeonholing:** In a legal context, this refers to the strict compartmentalization of offenses into narrow categories, which the Court fears could lead to fragmented justice or identity-based divisions.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 14:** Guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.
- **Article 15:** Explicitly prohibits discrimination by the State against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS):** The successor to the IPC. While it introduces provisions for 'Mob Lynching' (Section 103/2), petitioners argue it lacks specific nomenclature for "Racial Hate Crimes."
- **Bezbaruah Committee (2014):** Formed after the Nido Tania case, it recommended making "racial comments" and "gestures" punishable under the IPC to protect people from the Northeast.

Important Statistical Context

According to the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) and various human rights reports, incidents involving North-Eastern citizens in metropolitan hubs often go under-reported. Estimates suggest that over 60% of people from the Northeast living in Tier-1 cities have faced some form of verbal or physical harassment. Specifically, in the 2024-25 period, there has been a noted rise in "identity-based" altercations, though they are often FIR-registered under general assault or "hurt" provisions rather than hate crime statutes.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's cautious approach reflects a delicate balance between providing specific protections to vulnerable minorities and maintaining the universalist principle of the Indian Constitution. While the Court resists creating "silos" of crime, the referral to the Attorney-General suggests a recognition that the current legal machinery may need refinement to effectively deter racially motivated violence and preserve the social fabric of a diverse India.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education, Human Resources; Judiciary's role in protecting fundamental rights.
- **General Studies III:** Internal Security challenges (Ethnicity and regionalism), and the role of the North-East in the national mainstream.
- **Ethics (GS IV):** Concepts of prejudice, stereotypes, and the moral obligation of the state to ensure "Equal Worth" for all citizens.



3. Sovereign AI: Unveiling of the 'Vikram' Large Language Models

In a major step toward technological self-reliance, Bengaluru-based startup **Sarvam AI** unveiled two indigenous Large Language Models (LLMs) named **Vikram** at the AI Impact Summit 2026. Named in honor of the father of the Indian space program, Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, these models represent India's ambition to create a "sovereign AI" ecosystem that caters specifically to its unique linguistic and cultural landscape.

- **Dual-Model Strategy:** Sarvam AI introduced a **35-billion** parameter model optimized for real-time conversational tasks and a flagship **105-billion** parameter model designed for advanced reasoning and complex agentic workloads.
- **Linguistic Mastery:** Unlike global models predominantly trained on English, Vikram is built from scratch to support all **22 official Indian languages**, featuring voice-first optimization to bridge the digital divide for non-English speaking populations.
- **Public-Private Partnership:** The development was supported by the **IndiaAI Mission**, providing the startup with subsidized access to high-performance computing (GPUs) and aligning with the government's goal of reducing dependency on foreign AI platforms.
- **Efficiency & Scaling:** The models utilize a **Mixture-of-Experts (MoE)** architecture, which activates only a fraction of total parameters (e.g., 1 billion for the 35B model) during inference, significantly lowering the cost and energy required for population-scale deployment.
- **Open-Source Commitment:** To foster a domestic innovation hub, Sarvam AI has committed to releasing these models as **open-source**, allowing Indian developers, researchers, and government agencies to build localized applications on top of the Vikram foundation.
- **Sovereign Data Security:** By developing and deploying these models within India, the initiative ensures that sensitive citizen data remains under domestic jurisdiction, addressing critical concerns regarding **data sovereignty** and national security.



Definitions & Technical Concepts

- **Large Language Model (LLM):** An AI system trained on vast datasets to understand, generate, and manipulate human language. It uses deep learning to predict the next "token" in a sequence.
- **Parameters:** Often described as the "brain cells" of an AI, parameters are the internal variables the model learns during training. Generally, more parameters allow for more complex reasoning.
- **Mixture-of-Experts (MoE):** A neural network architecture where only specific "expert" parts of the model are activated for a given task, making large models much faster and cheaper to run.
- **Token Fertility:** A measure of how many "tokens" (units of text) an AI needs to process a single word. Vikram is designed for high efficiency in Indic scripts, which typically have high fertility in Western models like GPT.

Constitutional & Legal Context

- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Sovereign AI is increasingly viewed as a new layer of India's DPI, alongside UPI and Aadhaar, intended to democratize access to high-end technology.



- **IndiaAI Mission:** A flagship initiative under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** with an outlay of over **₹10,300 crore** to build a comprehensive AI ecosystem including compute capacity, datasets, and indigenous models.
- **Data Sovereignty:** While not explicitly a constitutional term, it relates to the right of a nation to govern data generated within its borders, linked to the **Right to Privacy (Article 21)** as per the *Puttaswamy* judgment.

Important Keypoints for Analysis

- **Overcoming Data Scarcity:** A major challenge for Indic AI is the lack of high-quality digital text in regional languages. Sarvam AI addressed this by curating a high-quality corpus of **2 trillion tokens** across 10 major languages.
- **Global Benchmarking:** Despite being smaller in size than global giants like DeepSeek (600B) or GPT-4, Vikram models have shown competitive performance in mathematical reasoning and OCR (Optical Character Recognition) for Indian scripts.
- **Voice-First Economy:** In a country with varying literacy levels, voice-enabled AI in local dialects (like the **Bulbul** text-to-speech model) is seen as the primary vehicle for delivering government services and education.

Conclusion

The launch of the Vikram models marks a pivot from being a consumer of AI to a creator of foundational technology. While the commercial sustainability of open-source models remains a challenge, the strategic value of having a "Made in India" LLM lies in its ability to serve 1.4 billion people in their own languages while maintaining control over the underlying intelligence.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; Governance and E-applications.
- **General Studies III:** Science and Technology—developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; Indigenization of technology and developing new technology; IT and Computers.
- **Economic Development:** Role of AI in achieving a \$5 trillion economy and the significance of the IndiaAI Mission in promoting startups.

4. Judicial Sensitivity: Supreme Court Panel on Compassionate Adjudication

The Supreme Court of India has recently constituted an expert committee to formulate comprehensive guidelines aimed at infusing sensitivity and compassion into judicial conduct. This move follows a disturbing instance where a High Court judge used explicit and insensitive language in a judicial order involving a minor sexual assault victim.

- **Formation of Expert Committee:** The Bench, led by Chief Justice Surya Kant, has appointed Justice Aniruddha Bose (Retd.), Director of the National Judicial Academy, to head a panel comprising legal practitioners, academics, and social workers.
- **Objective of Guidelines:** The primary goal is to sensitize judges on the appropriate use of language and conduct, particularly when presiding over cases involving vulnerable witnesses and victims of sexual assault.



- **Elimination of Legal Jargon:** The Court emphasized that the guidelines must be written in simple, accessible language to ensure that the victims—whose rights are at the core of this exercise—can fully comprehend the standards set for their protection.
- **Addressing Linguistic Bias:** The panel will identify offensive words and expressions in local dialects that are often used casually in society but constitute offenses under penal laws or violate the dignity of the victim.
- **Regional Accessibility:** To ensure a wide-reaching impact on the lower judiciary and the public, the final report is mandated to be translated into various regional languages.
- **Institutional Awareness:** The initiative seeks to bridge the gap between societal casualness and judicial decorum, reinforcing that the language used in a courtroom is a reflection of the state's commitment to the Right to Dignity.



Definitions & Key Concepts

- **Judicial Sensitivity:** The ability of a judge to perceive and respond to the emotional and psychological state of litigants, especially those from marginalized or traumatized backgrounds, without compromising impartiality.
- **Vulnerable Witness:** A witness who, by reason of age, physical or mental disability, or the nature of the offense (such as sexual assault), may be intimidated or traumatized by the standard court environment.
- **National Judicial Academy (NJA):** An autonomous government-funded training institute for judges in India, responsible for the continuing judicial education of the members of the Indian Judiciary.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The Right to Life and Personal Liberty includes the **Right to Dignity**. The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that a trial process that shames or dehumanizes a victim is a violation of this fundamental right.
- **POCSO Act, 2012:** Section 33 and Section 35 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act mandate child-friendly procedures and emphasize that the dignity of the child must be maintained at all stages of the judicial process.
- **Article 141:** The law declared by the Supreme Court is binding on all courts. Once these guidelines are accepted, they will serve as a mandatory code of conduct for the entire Indian judiciary.
- **Vishaka Guidelines & Beyond:** While *Vishaka* dealt with workplace harassment, the current initiative expands judicial accountability to the very language and "judicial temperament" displayed during proceedings.

Important Keypoints for Analysis

- **Precedent of the "Handbook on Combating Gender Stereotypes":** This new committee follows the 2023 release of a Supreme Court handbook designed to help judges identify and avoid common gender stereotypes in legal reasoning and writing.



- **The "Secondary Victimization" Risk:** Insensitive questioning or descriptive judicial orders can lead to secondary victimization, where the legal process itself becomes a source of fresh trauma for the survivor.
- **Role of the National Judicial Academy:** By involving the NJA, the Court is integrating these sensitivity standards into the foundational and mid-career training of judges, ensuring long-term institutional change.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's intervention highlights a shift from "mechanical adjudication" to "empathetic justice." By addressing the linguistic and behavioral nuances of the courtroom, the judiciary aims to ensure that the pursuit of truth does not come at the cost of a victim's dignity. The inclusion of non-legal experts like social workers signals a holistic approach to judicial reform that moves beyond black-letter law into the realm of social psychology and human rights.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Structure, organization, and functioning of the Judiciary; Issues arising out of the design and implementation of policies; Protection of vulnerable sections.
- **General Studies IV (Ethics):** Judicial Ethics; Compassion and Sensitivity towards the weaker sections; The role of language in shaping moral and social standards.
- **Essay Paper:** Themes related to Justice, Social Reform, and the evolving nature of the Indian Legal System.

5. Central Scrutiny on Odisha's Closure of Forest Rights Cells

The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) has initiated an inquiry into the Odisha government's decision to dissolve **Forest Rights Act (FRA) Cells** across the state. This move has sparked concern as Odisha, historically a leader in FRA implementation, still faces a significant backlog of pending land titles for tribal and forest-dwelling communities.

- **Sudden Dissolution of Support Units:** The Odisha government has ordered the closure of 50 sub-divisional FRA Cells functioning under the **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DA-JGUA)** scheme by March 2026, alongside the termination of support staff.
- **High Pendency of Claims:** Despite being a top performer, latest reports (December 2025) reveal a **20% pendency rate** in Odisha. Approximately **1.5 lakh claims** (including individual and community rights) remain undecided as of late 2025.
- **Impact on Record Digitization:** The FRA Cells were crucial for record-keeping, field facilitation, and the digitization of forest rights titles. Their removal is expected to hamper the "saturation mode" implementation target.
- **Discontinuation of State Schemes:** Prior to the DA-JGUA cell closures, the state had already phased out personnel from the **Mo Jungle Jami Yojana** at the district and tehsil levels, leading to a vacuum in technical expertise.





- **Central Intervention:** The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is reviewing these directives to ensure that support staff are maintained at all levels, as the cessation of these administrative units may jeopardize the "historical justice" mandate of the 2006 Act.
- **March Deadline Pressure:** The state has directed that all pending forest rights claims at the sub-divisional level must be cleared by the end of March 2026, raising fears of hasty rejections without proper ground verification.

Definitions & Key Concepts

- **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006:** Formally known as The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, it recognizes the rights of forest-dwelling communities to land and other resources.
- **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DA-JGUA):** A Central scheme launched in 2024 aimed at the holistic development of tribal villages, including the expedited processing of FRA claims.
- **Community Forest Resource (CFR) Rights:** Rights to protect, regenerate, or manage any community forest resource which the communities have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 244 (Schedule V):** Provides for the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes, empowering the Governor and the Tribes Advisory Council to protect tribal land rights.
- **Section 12 of FRA 2006:** Empowers the Central Government (Ministry of Tribal Affairs) to issue directions and guidelines to State Governments for the effective implementation of the Act.
- **Historical Injustice Clause:** The Preamble of the FRA explicitly states the Act aims to undo the "historical injustice" where forest rights on ancestral lands were not adequately recognized during colonial and post-independence consolidation.

Important Statistics (as of Dec 2025)

Category	Status in Odisha	National Context
Total Claims Filed	~7.69 Lakh	Highest in India
Pendency Rate	20%	6th Highest in India
Pending IFR Claims	~1.22 Lakh	Individual Forest Rights
Pending CFR Claims	~12,934	Community Forest Resource Rights

Conclusion

The dismantling of FRA administrative infrastructure in Odisha presents a paradox: the state aims for swift claim clearance by March 2026 while simultaneously removing the human resources (FRA Cells) required for accurate verification. While the state may seek to shift from a project-based model to a permanent revenue model, the immediate vacuum risks a high rate of claim rejections, potentially leading to social unrest and legal challenges regarding the "due process" mandated by the FRA.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; Issues relating to the management of Social Sector/Services.
- **GS Paper III:** Land Reforms in India; Conservation and Environmental Impact Assessment; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security (Tribal alienation).
- **Ethics:** Social justice and the moral obligation of the state to recognize traditional rights over administrative convenience.

6. Kerala Nativity Card Bill: Legislative Framework for State Identity

The Kerala Cabinet has approved the **Kerala Nativity Card Bill**, a significant legislative measure aimed at providing a permanent, legally backed identification document for the state's natives. Scheduled to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly on **February 23, 2026**, the Bill transitions the existing paper-based "Nativity Certificate" into a durable, photo-embedded "Nativity Card" to streamline administrative processes.

- **Transition to Permanent Documentation:** The Bill seeks to replace the current practice of repeatedly issuing nativity certificates for various purposes with a one-time, permanent photo-affixed card, reducing bureaucratic hurdles for citizens.
- **Legal and Authoritative Status:** Unlike the existing certificate, the Nativity Card will have statutory backing, serving as the definitive document for state government services, educational quotas, and other "social requirements."
- **Defined Eligibility Criteria:** A "Native" is defined as a person born in Kerala who has not acquired foreign citizenship, or an individual with an ancestor born in Kerala who retained Indian citizenship. It also includes those born outside Kerala due to their parents' employment, provided they hold Indian citizenship.
- **Issuing Authority and Oversight:** The **Tahsildar** is designated as the competent authority for issuing the card. A village-level register will be maintained, and the District Collector is empowered to review or modify decisions made by the Revenue Divisional Officer (RDO).
- **Security and Digital Integration:** The card is expected to incorporate advanced security features such as holograms and potentially chips. It will be linked to village records and maintained in digital registers to ensure authenticity and prevent fraud.
- **Addressing Identity Concerns:** The government has positioned the card as a tool to help individuals "easily prove their existence" and origin, particularly in the context of contemporary debates over citizenship and documentation.



Definitions & Key Terms

- **Nativity Card:** A permanent, photo-bearing state identity document certifying an individual's birth or ancestral roots in Kerala.
- **Native:** Under this Bill, an Indian citizen born in Kerala or having Kerala-born lineage who has not relinquished Indian citizenship for foreign nationality.



- **SIR (Special Intensive Revision):** A process used by the Election Commission to update and refine electoral rolls; the timing of the Nativity Card proposal has been linked to concerns raised during SIR.

Constitutional & Legal Context

- **Article 162:** Extends the executive power of a State to matters with respect to which the State Legislature has power to make laws (used for administrative certificates).
- **State List (Schedule VII):** The Bill falls under the state's domain regarding "Public Order" and "Revenue," as well as its power to manage services provided by the state government.
- **Article 15(1):** Prohibits discrimination on grounds of place of birth; however, the Supreme Court has allowed "Domicile" or "Nativity" as a valid criterion for state-specific benefits (e.g., in *Pradeep Jain v. Union of India*).
- **Federalism Concerns:** Critics argue that such cards may border on "regional citizenship," a power solely reserved for the Union under **Part II (Articles 5-11)** of the Constitution.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, and significant provisions; Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States; Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.
- **Governance:** Transparency and accountability; E-governance applications; Role of identification documents in welfare delivery.
- **General Studies III:** Internal Security—challenges to the social fabric; Issues related to migration and identity.

Conclusion

While the Kerala Nativity Card Bill is primarily a tool for administrative convenience and "pride in regional identity," it sits at the intersection of a complex debate on federalism and national vs. regional identity. By granting statutory status to the card, Kerala aims to provide its citizens with a durable shield against documentation challenges, though the move is likely to face scrutiny regarding its constitutional compatibility with the concept of single citizenship in India.

7. IACE 2026: Ayush at the Forefront of Global Healthcare Diplomacy

The 3rd International Ayush Conference & Exhibition (IACE 2026), held in Dubai, concluded with a powerful affirmation of India's traditional medicine systems as central to the global health narrative. Addressing representatives from **28 nations**, Union Minister Shri Prataprao Jadhav positioned Ayush not merely as an alternative, but as a primary pillar for a preventive and human-centric global healthcare system.

- **Evidence-Based Transition:** A primary highlight was the deliberation on a **Draft International White Paper**. This document seeks to shift the global perception of Ayush from "experience-based" traditional practice to "evidence-based" scientific validation, establishing structured treatment protocols for global adoption.
- **Global Regulatory Harmonization:** The conference pushed for **pharmacopeial compliance** and international certification standards. This is aimed at streamlining the export of Ayush products and ensuring they meet the stringent safety and quality benchmarks required by international markets like the EU and USA.



- **Expansion of Medical Value Travel:** IACE 2026 emphasized India's potential as a global hub for **Medical Value Travel (Heal in India)**. By integrating Ayurveda, Yoga, and Naturopathy into wellness tourism, India aims to address the rising global burden of lifestyle disorders and mental health challenges.
- **Strategic Health Diplomacy:** The event reinforced the "Delhi Declaration" principles from the WHO Global Summit. It leveraged Ayush as a "bridge" for cultural and scientific exchange, strengthening India's **Soft Power** and its role in global health security.
- **Institutional Partnerships:** A key outcome was the commitment to joint research programmes and academic exchanges. The participation of over 120 exhibitors and 1,500 delegates underscores a growing **Ayush-Economy**, currently valued at over **\$43 billion**.
- **The "One Health" Approach:** Discussions integrated the interdependence of human, animal, and environmental health, aligning Ayush philosophies with the modern **One Health** framework and Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being).



Key Definitions & Core Pillars

- **Ayush:** An acronym for the six traditional systems of medicine practiced in India: **Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, and Homoeopathy**.
- **Medical Value Travel (MVT):** Also known as medical tourism, it refers to the practice of traveling across international borders to obtain healthcare services, where Ayush provides a unique holistic and rehabilitative edge.
- **Pharmacopeial Compliance:** Adherence to a set of standards for the quality, purity, and strength of medicines, essential for the global trade of herbal and traditional drugs.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Entry 6, List II (State List):** "Public health and sanitation; hospitals and dispensaries" are primarily state subjects, but the Union facilitates Ayush through national policies.
- **National Ayush Mission (NAM):** A Centrally Sponsored Scheme launched to improve Ayush healthcare services, strengthen educational systems, and ensure quality control of Ayush drugs.
- **Article 47 (Directive Principles):** Mandates the State to regard the improvement of public health as among its primary duties, providing the constitutional basis for promoting traditional holistic medicine.
- **India-EU FTA (Contextual):** Recent trade dialogues have focused on the **Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs)** for Ayush practitioners, allowing Indian traditional doctors to provide services in European territories.

Important Analysis Keypoints

- **Integration vs. Mixopathy:** A critical debate remains regarding the "meaningful integration" of Ayush with Allopathy. While the government promotes an **Integrative Medicine** model, professional bodies like the IMA caution against "Mixopathy" (blurring lines between different medical systems without rigorous cross-training).



- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** The launch of tools like 'Bharat-Vistaar' (an AI assistant for medicinal plant farmers) and the **Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)** are vital in preventing biopiracy and digitizing ancient wisdom for modern research.
- **The WHO Factor:** The establishment of the **WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine in Jamnagar**, Gujarat, is a strategic victory, making India a global "rule-maker" for traditional medicine standards.

Conclusion

The IACE 2026 marks the graduation of Ayush from a regional heritage to a global scientific commodity. By focusing on **evidence generation** and **regulatory transparency**, India is successfully addressing the historical skepticism of the West. If the proposed White Paper succeeds in standardizing protocols, Ayush could become a cornerstone of the global "wellness economy," providing sustainable solutions to the 21st-century crises of non-communicable diseases and mental health.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Health-related social sector issues; International relations (Soft Power and Health Diplomacy); Government policies for development.
- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology (Indigenization of technology); Economy (Export potential and Medical Tourism); Biodiversity (Medicinal plants and IPR issues).
- **Prelims Focus:** Acronyms (IACE, TKDL), names of traditional systems (Sowa-Rigpa), and locations of key institutions (WHO-GCTM Jamnagar).

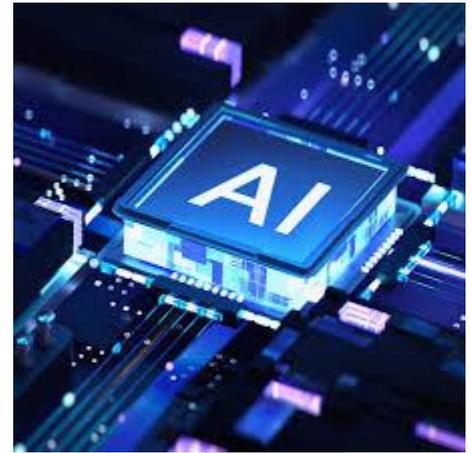
8. Restoring Balance: The Struggle Against Copyright Maximalism in the AI Era

The debate over copyright law has intensified with the rise of Artificial Intelligence, revealing a growing friction between "copyright maximalism" and the right to access knowledge. As discussed at the **India-AI Impact Summit 2026**, there is an urgent need to reform rigid intellectual property frameworks that currently obstruct technological progress and the rights of vulnerable groups, such as the visually impaired.

- **The Perils of Copyright Maximalism:** Originally designed as a limited 14-year monopoly to encourage creativity, copyright has expanded into a nearly perpetual regime (author's life plus 60–70 years). This "maximalism" treats all digital fragments as protected assets, hindering the public domain.
- **Marrakesh Treaty as a Precedent:** A milestone in "Right to Read" advocacy, this treaty allows for national exceptions and cross-border exchange of books in accessible formats (like DAISY) for the visually impaired, overcoming the "book famine" caused by rigid copyright barriers.
- **Legal Vacuum for AI Training:** AI models require massive training data (Text and Data Mining), but Indian law lacks an explicit exception for this. While Section 52 of the **Copyright Act, 1957** offers some "fair dealing" protections, the lack of a broad "Data Mining" clause creates a "pall of legal uncertainty."
- **Global Best Practices:** Jurisdictions like the EU, Japan, and Singapore have adopted specific exceptions for machine-based use. Japan's law uniquely permits data analysis that does not involve "enjoying the ideas or emotions expressed," treating copyrighted works purely as statistical data.
- **Impact on Innovation:** By treating mechanistic copying (crawling) as infringement, traditional copyright laws effectively make indigenous AI development illegal in many regions, forcing developers to rely on foreign datasets and models.



- **Need for Sovereign Datasets:** The summit emphasized that governments should curate locally relevant datasets and establish "Safe Harbour" provisions to protect open-source AI models from predatory copyright claims.



Definitions & Key Terms

- **Copyright Maximalism:** A philosophy advocating for the continuous expansion of copyright terms and the narrowing of exceptions, often prioritizing corporate control over public access.
- **Marrakesh Treaty (2013):** An international treaty administered by WIPO that mandates exceptions to copyright law to facilitate the creation of accessible versions of books for people with print disabilities. India was the first country to ratify it.
- **Text and Data Mining (TDM):** The process of using automated techniques to analyze large volumes of digital content to identify patterns, trends, and correlations—essential for training Large Language Models (LLMs).
- **DAISY (Digital Accessible Information System):** A technical standard for digital formats (like audiobooks or e-text) designed specifically to be accessible for people with print disabilities.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Copyright Act, 1957:** The primary legislation in India. While **Section 52(1)(zb)** provides exceptions for the disabled, it does not explicitly cover "machine learning" or "large-scale data scraping" for commercial AI.
- **Article 19(1)(a):** The Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression includes the **Right to Receive Information**. Critics argue that overly restrictive copyright laws infringe upon this fundamental right by limiting access to knowledge.
- **Article 21: The Right to Dignity and Education.** Denying visually impaired persons access to books in friendly formats has been challenged as a violation of their right to lead a dignified life with equal educational opportunities.
- **Rule of Fair Dealing:** A legal doctrine that permits limited use of copyrighted material without permission for purposes like research, private study, criticism, or news reporting.

Conclusion

Copyright law must return to its roots—fostering creativity rather than protecting obsolete business models. As India positions itself as a global AI leader, it must lead the push for flexible copyright exceptions. Intellectual property should serve as a bridge to innovation, not a barrier to the "common heritage of mankind." Balancing the economic rights of creators with the public's "Right to Research" is critical for the 21st-century knowledge economy.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services; Government policies and interventions for development.
- **General Studies III:** Intellectual Property Rights (IPR); Science and Technology—developments and their applications; IT and Computers.



- **Essay/Ethics:** The tension between private property (Copyright) and public good (Access to Knowledge); Social justice for the differently-abled.

9. Military AI Governance: India's Strategic Abstention and Global Dilemmas

In the lead-up to the **India–AI Impact Summit 2026** in New Delhi, the global discourse on the militarization of Artificial Intelligence has reached a critical juncture. At the third global summit on **Responsible AI in the Military Domain (REAIM 2026)** held in Spain, India joined major powers like the U.S. and China in abstaining from the 'Pathways to Action' declaration. This move underscores India's cautious "watch-and-wait" policy, balancing ethical imperatives with national security requirements.

- **Decline in Global Consensus:** The REAIM 2026 summit saw a significant drop in commitment, with only **35 out of 85 participating countries** signing the 'Pathways to Action' pact. This reflects growing hesitation among technologically advanced states to accept binding constraints on dual-use technologies.
- **Dual-Use Complexity:** AI presents a unique challenge in arms control because its civilian R&D (logistics, data analysis) is often indistinguishable from military applications. This "dual-use" nature makes verifying compliance with international treaties nearly impossible without intrusive oversight.
- **Lethal Autonomous Weapons (LAWS):** Often termed "killer robots," LAWS remain the most contentious issue. While smaller nations push for an outright ban, countries like India view a legally binding instrument as "**premature**," arguing that the defensive potential of autonomous systems (e.g., border surveillance, anti-missile defense) must be fully explored.
- **Definitional Deadlock:** There is no international consensus on what constitutes "autonomy." States with advanced AI capabilities prefer high-threshold definitions to maintain operational freedom, while others seek restrictive definitions to curb the technological gap.
- **Strategic Reluctance:** India's abstention is rooted in its unique security environment—characterized by long, contested borders and cross-border terrorism. New Delhi seeks to avoid "regulatory capture" that might prevent it from developing indigenous AI-driven defense capabilities like the **Indrajeel drones** or **Swarm technologies**.
- **The Call for Non-Binding Guardrails:** Experts suggest that instead of an immediate ban, the focus should shift to non-binding mechanisms: excluding AI from nuclear command and control, voluntary data-sharing on military AI development, and creating a "risk hierarchy" for different AI use cases.



Definitions & Key Terms

- **LAWS (Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems):** Weapons that, once activated, can search for, select, and engage targets without further human intervention.
- **Human-in-the-Loop:** A system where the AI suggests actions, but a human must explicitly authorize the lethal force.
- **Human-out-of-the-Loop:** A fully autonomous system where no human intervention occurs between activation and the engagement of a target.



- **Dual-Use Technology:** Technology that can be used for both peaceful/civilian purposes and military/destructive purposes (e.g., GPS, Nuclear energy, AI).

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
- **Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW):** The UN-led forum where the Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) discusses LAWS. India considers this the only appropriate forum for such negotiations, resisting parallel processes like REAIM.
- **Defence AI Council (DAIC):** An Indian body chaired by the Defence Minister, tasked with providing strategic direction for the adoption of AI in the armed forces.
- **IHL (International Humanitarian Law):** The primary legal framework (including the Geneva Conventions) that applies to AI in warfare, demanding that any weapon must be able to distinguish between combatants and civilians (**Principle of Distinction**).

Conclusion

India's refusal to sign the REAIM 2026 declaration is not a rejection of "responsibility" but a calculated refusal to accept "unequal" regulations. Much like its stance on the NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty), India seeks to ensure that it does not become a second-tier power by signing away its right to develop critical emerging technologies. The path forward lies in championing a **non-binding, accountability-based framework** that establishes safety guardrails—particularly in nuclear and chemical domains—without stifling the indigenization of defense technology.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** International relations; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Global groupings and agreements involving India.
- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology—developments and their applications; Security challenges and their management in border areas; Indigenization of technology.
- **Ethics (GS IV):** Ethical dilemmas in warfare; De-humanization of conflict through algorithms; Responsibility and accountability in automated systems.

10. Judicial Reforms: Diversity in Appointments and Regional Benches

A Private Member Bill introduced by MP P. Wilson seeks to amend the Constitution to address two long-standing issues in the Indian judiciary: the lack of social representation in higher judicial appointments and the geographical barriers to accessing the Supreme Court. The Bill proposes mandatory reservation-like diversity and the establishment of regional benches to decentralize justice.

- **Mandating Social Diversity:** The Bill requires that appointments to the Supreme Court and High Courts reflect India's social fabric by giving due representation to SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities, and women in proportion to their population.
- **Timeline for Executive Action:** To prevent "pocket vetoes" where the government sits on recommendations, the Bill mandates a 90-day maximum timeline for the Centre to notify collegium recommendations.



- **Regional Benches for Accessibility:** It proposes setting up permanent regional benches of the Supreme Court in Chennai, Mumbai, and Kolkata, while the main Constitution Bench remains in Delhi to handle matters of constitutional importance.
- **Addressing Pendency:** With over 90,000 cases pending in the Supreme Court as of January 2026, regional benches are seen as a solution to reduce the burden on the principal seat and lower the litigation cost for common citizens.
- **Institutionalizing Inclusivity:** The Bill moves beyond the "merit-only" narrative of the collegium, arguing that a diverse judiciary enhances public trust and brings varied lived experiences to legal interpretations.
- **Constitutional Directive:** By seeking an amendment, the Bill aims to turn the current informal practice of "regional and communal balance" into a formal constitutional obligation.

Key Definitions & Historical Evolution

- **Collegium System:** A system of appointment and transfer of judges that has evolved through Supreme Court judgments (Three Judges Cases), where a body of senior-most judges makes recommendations to the President.
- **First Judges Case (1981):** Upheld executive primacy; "consultation" with the CJI did not mean "concurrence."
- **Second Judges Case (1993):** Introduced the Collegium; "consultation" was re-interpreted as "concurrence."
- **Third Judges Case (1998):** Expanded the Collegium to the CJI and four senior-most judges for SC appointments.
- **Private Member Bill:** A Bill introduced by any Member of Parliament who is not a Minister. While they rarely become law, they serve as vital tools for highlighting policy gaps and initiating public debate.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 124:** Pertains to the appointment of SC judges by the President after consultation with judges of the SC and HCs.
- **Article 217:** Pertains to the appointment of High Court judges.
- **Article 130:** Provides that the Supreme Court shall sit in Delhi or in such other place or places as the CJI may, with the approval of the President, appoint. This article already allows for regional benches without a constitutional amendment.
- **99th Constitutional Amendment & NJAC:** Attempted to replace the Collegium with the National Judicial Appointments Commission in 2014; struck down in 2015 as a violation of the "Basic Structure" (Independence of Judiciary).

Diversity Statistics in Higher Judiciary (2018-2024)

The following table highlights the representation gap that the Bill seeks to address:

| Social Category | Representation Percentage |



| :--- | :--- |

| **SC, ST, and OBC** | ~20% |

| **Women** | <15% |

| **Religious Minorities** | <5% |

| **General Category/Others** | ~80% |

Conclusion

The proposed Bill highlights a critical democratic deficit in the Indian judiciary. While judicial independence is non-negotiable, the current "judges appointing judges" model lacks transparency and social diversity. Setting up regional benches, as recommended by the 229th Law Commission Report, would democratize access to justice. A balanced approach—incorporating a more inclusive recruitment process like an All India Judicial Service (AIJS) or a reformed NJAC—is essential to ensure the judiciary remains both independent and representative.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Separation of powers; Statutory, regulatory, and quasi-judicial bodies; Appointment to various Constitutional posts; Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.
- **Judiciary:** The debate between the Collegium vs. NJAC; Regional Benches (Article 130); Judicial overreach vs. activism.
- **Social Justice:** Representation of marginalized communities and women in constitutional high offices.

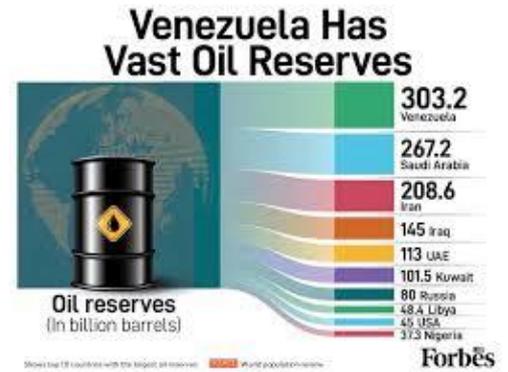
11. Venezuelan Crude and Indian Refineries: Opportunities and Technical Obstacles

Following the recent U.S. intervention in Venezuela and the capture of President Nicolás Maduro in early 2026, the global energy landscape is facing a potential re-entry of Venezuelan oil into the mainstream market. While a new India-U.S. trade agreement suggests a shift toward American and potentially Venezuelan crude, Indian refiners remain cautious due to significant technical, logistical, and political hurdles associated with the South American nation's "heavy" oil.

- **Technical Compatibility Barriers:** Venezuelan crude is characterized by high viscosity (resistance to flow) and a high acid number, which can corrode refinery infrastructure like pipes, valves, and pressure vessels. It is also rich in metals and nitrogen, requiring complex secondary processing.
- **Refining Constraints:** Most Indian public sector refineries are not optimized for "bottom-heavy" Venezuelan grades. To process it, the crude must be co-blended with lighter varieties at a ratio of 10-15%. Only complex refineries, such as Reliance's Jamnagar, can currently handle heavy and extra-heavy crude at scale.
- **Economic Viability and Discounts:** According to **SBI Research (February 2026)**, India could save up to \$3 billion annually by switching to Venezuelan oil, provided it is offered at a discount of \$10-12 per barrel to offset the high logistics and handling costs.
- **Logistical Hurdles:** Venezuela is geographically distant, with shipping routes roughly twice as long as those from Russia and five times those from the Middle East. This increases freight rates, insurance costs, and delivery times, challenging the "just-in-time" supply chains of Indian firms.



- Political and Strategic Risk:** Despite U.S. assurances, the unilateral "takeover" of Venezuelan assets has been met with global condemnation. This creates a "pall of legal uncertainty" for Indian investments and long-term contracts, especially if sanctions are inconsistently applied or contested internationally.
- Historical Context and Shift:** Venezuela's share in India's crude basket dropped from 12% in 2015 to nearly zero during previous sanction regimes. While imports briefly revived in 2023-24, they currently represent only 1-2% of the total basket as India prioritizes stability and diversified sourcing.



Key Definitions & Concepts

- Viscosity:** A measure of a fluid's resistance to flow. High-viscosity oil is "sticky" and requires more energy to transport through pipelines.
- Acid Number:** An indicator of the quantity of acidic components in the oil; a high number signifies a greater risk of corrosion to refinery equipment.
- Bottom-Heavy Crude:** Crude oil that yields a higher percentage of heavier products like bitumen and fuel oil rather than high-value petrol or diesel.
- Co-blending:** The process of mixing heavy, low-quality crude with lighter, high-quality crude to create a feedstock that existing refinery units can process.

Constitutional & Legal Context

- Article 73:** Extends the executive power of the Union to international treaties and agreements. The India-U.S. trade agreement of February 2026 falls under this mandate.
- Energy Security Policy:** India's quest for strategic autonomy involves diversifying its "Crude Oil Basket" to minimize the impact of regional conflicts or sanctions.
- UNSC and Sovereignty:** India traditionally follows UN-mandated sanctions rather than unilateral ones. The current U.S. control over Venezuelan oil raises questions under international law regarding state sovereignty and resource control.

Refinery Capacity & Complexity

Refinery	Type/Complexity	Venezuelan Crude Capability
Reliance Jamnagar	High (Nelson Complexity Index 21+)	High (Can process extra-heavy grades)
HPCL / BPCL	Moderate	Limited (Requires significant co-blending)
Nayara Vadinar	High	High (Designed for heavy Latin American crude)



Conclusion

The prospect of Venezuelan oil flowing into Indian refineries is an economic opportunity clouded by technical and geopolitical friction. While private giants like Reliance are well-equipped to leverage discounted heavy crude, the state-run refiners face an uphill task in recalibrating their infrastructure. For India, the decision to import from Venezuela remains a "commercial merit" choice rather than a political obligation, as it seeks to balance its burgeoning energy needs with the volatility of a U.S.-led transition in Caracas.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Energy security; Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth; Infrastructure (Energy sector).
- **Economic Geography:** Distribution of key natural resources (Oil) across the world; Factors responsible for the location of refineries.

12. Strategic Shift in Counter-Terrorism: CRPF High-Altitude Bases in J&K

In response to shifting militant tactics, the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has significantly altered its operational footprint in Jammu and Kashmir. By establishing a network of **43 Temporary Operating Bases (TOBs)** at altitudes ranging from 3,000 to 6,000 feet, the security forces aim to dismantle the new "height-based" sanctuary model adopted by foreign terrorists.

- **Countering the "Upper Reaches" Strategy:** Following the Pahalgam terror attack in April 2025, intelligence indicated that terrorists moved from the valley floor to high-altitude ridges to evade traditional cordons. These new bases are designed to flush out militants from these difficult terrains.
- **Force Distribution and Deployment:** Of the 43 TOBs, **26 are situated in the Kashmir Valley and 17 in the Jammu region.** Key focus areas include the Pahalgam-Tral-Harwan axis and the Mahadev Hill ridges, which have recently emerged as critical transit corridors.
- **Small Team Agility:** Unlike traditional large camps, these bases house compact teams of **15 to 20 personnel.** This allows for high mobility, enabling rapid intelligence-based search and assault operations in rugged mountainous topography.
- **Threat Profile:** Current intelligence estimates suggest a dominance of foreign elements, with approximately **60 foreign terrorists** active in the Valley and **40 in the Jammu region,** contrasting with a significantly lower number of local recruits.
- **Operational Success:** The effectiveness of this "peak advantage" strategy was demonstrated during the Faqir Gujri operations in Harwan, where high-altitude bases allowed for sustained, long-term intelligence-based strikes.
- **Area Domination:** The presence of these bases ensures continuous surveillance over traditional infiltration routes and high-altitude hideouts, effectively reducing the reaction time for security forces during encounters.

Definitions & Tactical Concepts

- **Temporary Operating Base (TOB):** A tactical, often mobile, military or paramilitary station set up for a specific duration to conduct area domination and targeted operations in a specific sector.



- **Foreign Terrorists (FTs):** Insurgents of non-Indian origin, primarily infiltrating across the Line of Control (LoC), who currently form the bulk of the militant cadre in J&K.
- **Area Domination:** A counter-insurgency tactic where security forces maintain a visible and constant presence in a specific region to prevent enemy movement and build local intelligence networks.



Legal & Constitutional Framework

- **Article 355:** Mandates the Union to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance. The deployment of the CRPF (a Central Armed Police Force) is a direct exercise of this duty.
- **AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act), 1958:** Provides the legal framework and special powers to the armed forces and CAPFs in "disturbed areas" of J&K to maintain public order.
- **CRPF Act, 1949:** The primary legislation governing the constitution and regulation of the CRPF, defining its role as an auxiliary to the state police for internal security.

Important Strategic Keypoints

- **The Jammu Pivot:** The establishment of 17 bases in Jammu marks a strategic recognition of the "revival of militancy" in the Pir Panjal and Chenab valley regions, which had been relatively peaceful for over a decade.
- **Intelligence-Led Policing:** The TOBs act as localized intelligence hubs. Being closer to the nomadic communities (like the Gujjars and Bakarwals) helps in gathering human intelligence (HUMINT) regarding militant movement.
- **Topographical Challenge:** Operating at 6,000 feet requires specialized training, high-altitude gear, and acclimatization, signaling a specialized evolution in CRPF's traditional riot-control and urban-patrolling role.

Conclusion

The transition of the CRPF from valley-based patrolling to high-altitude area domination signifies a "proactive" rather than "reactive" security posture. By denying terrorists the safety of the upper reaches, the security forces are squeezing the operational space for foreign elements. However, the long-term success of these TOBs will depend on their ability to integrate with technical intelligence (TECHINT) like drones and thermal imaging to monitor the vast, porous mountainous gaps.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security; Challenges to internal security through communication networks; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security; Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.
- **GS Paper II:** Federalism (Role of Central Forces in State security); Governance and the impact of security on regional development.
- **Geography (Mapping):** Important ridges and axes in J&K such as the Pir Panjal range, Harwan, and the Tral-Pahalgam axis.



13. VVP-II: Strategic Expansion of India's Vibrant Village Programme

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has initiated the second phase of the **Vibrant Village Programme (VVP-II)**, significantly expanding the scheme's geographical and strategic footprint. Moving beyond its initial focus on the northern borders, VVP-II aims to transform **1,954 strategic villages** along India's land borders with Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Myanmar into self-sufficient growth centres.

- **Broadened Strategic Scope:** Unlike Phase-I (2023), which targeted the China border, Phase-II covers 15 States and 2 Union Territories. It includes villages abutting international borders in regions like the Northeast (Assam, Mizoram, Manipur) and the West (Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab).
- **Launch in Assam:** Union Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to formally launch VVP-II on **February 20, 2026**, from **Nathanpur village** in Assam's Cachar district, highlighting the government's focus on the Bangladesh border.
- **Funding and Implementation:** VVP-II is a **Central Sector Scheme** (100% Union funded) with a financial outlay of **₹6,839 crore** for the period up to FY 2028-29. This is a shift from the Centrally Sponsored model (shared funding) used in Phase-I.
- **Convergence Model:** The programme operates on a "saturation-based approach," ensuring that all existing Central and State welfare schemes reach 100% of the eligible population in these identified villages.
- **Security through Development:** A key objective is to treat border residents as the "**eyes and ears**" of the Border Guarding Forces (BGFs). By improving living standards and providing local livelihoods, the scheme aims to curb "out-migration," which historically creates security vacuums in sensitive zones.
- **Infrastructure Priorities:** The focus remains on four thematic pillars: All-weather road connectivity (PMGSY-IV), 24x7 electricity (on-grid and renewable), high-speed telecom/internet connectivity, and the development of sustainable tourism and cooperatives.



Key Definitions & Core Pillars

- **Central Sector Scheme:** A scheme entirely funded and implemented by the Central Government, unlike Centrally Sponsored Schemes where costs are shared with States.
- **Eyes and Ears of the Nation:** A strategic concept where a prosperous and patriotic border population acts as the first line of intelligence and defense against infiltration and trans-border crimes.
- **Reverse Migration:** The phenomenon of people returning to their native border villages due to improved infrastructure and livelihood opportunities, essential for maintaining demographic stability.



Constitutional & Legal Context

- **Article 355:** Imposes a duty on the Union to protect States against external aggression and internal disturbance, providing the constitutional rationale for border area development.
- **Seventh Schedule (List I, Entry 2):** "Naval, military and air forces; any other armed forces of the Union" allows the MHA to lead development initiatives that directly impact national security and border management.
- **Viksit Bharat @2047:** VVP-II is aligned with the national vision of a developed India, emphasizing that "security through prosperity" is a prerequisite for a developed nation status.

Comparison: VVP Phase-I vs. Phase-II

Feature	Phase-I (VVP-I)	Phase-II (VVP-II)
Launch Year	2023	2025/2026
Primary Target	Northern Border (China)	Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar
Funding Type	Centrally Sponsored (Shared)	Central Sector (100% Union)
Total Outlay	₹4,800 crore	₹6,839 crore
Key States	Ar.P, HP, UK, Sikkim, Ladakh	15 States & 2 UTs (Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, etc.)

Conclusion

VVP-II marks a paradigm shift in India's border management strategy—moving from a purely "denial-based" military approach to a "development-led" security model. By integrating remote villages into the national mainstream through economic and cultural assimilation, the government is building a resilient human shield. The successful implementation of VVP-II will be critical in stabilizing India's diverse and volatile land borders while fulfilling the promise of inclusive growth.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security; Border area management.
- **Geography:** Strategic importance of India's international land borders (ILBs) and the socio-economic challenges of Himalayan and North-eastern topographies.