DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 10/03/2026 (TUESDAY)

National
International
Economy
Sports
Science and Tech
Person in News
Summits / Conference
Miscellaneous

CURRENT AFFAIRS

<u>Table of Contents</u>

1. Strengthening India's Intellectual Property (IP) Ecosystem

- **Global Benchmarking:** The Union Minister has set a target to transition India's IP approval system into the global top five for speed, transparency, and efficiency, specifically targeting faster disposal of patents, trademarks, and copyrights.

- **Innovation Infrastructure:** To nurture a culture of inquiry from the grassroots, the government is establishing 50,000 new innovation labs in schools, aiming to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world problem-solving.

- **Decadal Growth Trajectory:** India has recorded a 215% increase in patent filings over the last decade, leading to a significant jump in the Global Innovation Index (GII) from 81st in 2015 to 38th in 2026.

- **Inclusive IP Expansion:** There is a strategic focus on "Women-led Development," with patent filings by women increasing 345 times in 12 years; the government proposes up to 80% fee reductions for women, MSMEs, and startups.

- **Capacity Building:** To address backlogs, the Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks (CGPDTM) is undergoing massive recruitment and technological upgrades to align with World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) standards.

- **Economic Integration:** Linking IP with trade, the Minister emphasized that India's nine recently signed FTAs provide preferential market access, urging innovators to "Innovate, Patent, Produce, and Prosper" to fuel *Atmanirbhar Bharat*.

Key Definitions

- **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):** Legal rights given to inventors or creators to protect their inventions or creations for a certain period of time.

- **Global Innovation Index (GII):** An annual ranking of countries by their capacity for, and success in, innovation, published by WIPO in partnership with other institutions.

- **Geographical Indication (GI):** A sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that are due to that origin.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- **Article 253:** Empowers Parliament to make laws for implementing international certificates/agreements, which forms the basis for IPR legislation in India.

- **The Patents Act, 1970:** The primary legislation governing patents in India, later amended to comply with the TRIPS Agreement.

- **National IPR Policy, 2016:** A vision document that guides the future of IPRs in India under the slogan "Creative India; Innovative India."

- **International Obligations:** India is a signatory to the TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement under the WTO and various WIPO-administered treaties like the Paris Convention and Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT).

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Jai Anusandhan:** The expansion of the national slogan to include "Research" underscores the shift toward a knowledge-based economy.

- **Incentivization:** Fee reductions of 50% to 80% for MSMEs and startups have been implemented to democratize the IP filing process.

- **Model Hubs:** Institutions like IIT Madras and its incubation centers are being viewed as blueprints for Tier-2 and Tier-3 city development.

Conclusion

The transformation of India's IP regime from a slow, bureaucratic process to a streamlined, digital-first ecosystem is central to its goal of becoming a $5 trillion economy. By integrating youth, women, and rural innovators through school labs and GI registrations, India is moving beyond mere consumption of technology to becoming a global provider of original intellectual capital.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; Issues arising out of their design and implementation.

- **GS Paper III:** Economics (IPR issues), Science & Technology (indigenization of technology), and growth/employment (MSMEs and Startups).

- **Prelims:** Rankings (GII), WIPO, and specific provisions of the Patents and GI Acts.

2. Impact of West Asia Conflict on India's Energy Security

- **Strategic Shift in Priority:** Amidst the Iran-Israel conflict and Brent crude crossing $100 per barrel, the Indian government has pivoted its focus from **price stability to supply security**, prioritizing the continuous physical availability of crude oil and LNG over inflationary concerns.

- **Vulnerability of the Strait of Hormuz:** As a critical maritime chokepoint handling 20% of global liquid petroleum and LNG, the effective suspension of tanker movements through the Strait puts nearly **half of India's oil imports** (primarily from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and UAE) at structural risk.

- **Macroeconomic Implications:** With an oil import dependency exceeding **88%**, every $1/barrel increase in crude prices raises India's annual import bill by approximately $2 billion, potentially widening the **Current Account Deficit (CAD)** by 0.4% of GDP for every 10% price hike.

WEST ASIAN CONFLICT & INDIA'S ENERGY RISK

- **Diversification Strategy:** Indian refiners are mitigating risks by ramping up purchases from **non-Hormuz regions** (currently 60% of imports) and leveraging Russian crude "on water" to maintain a 6-to-8 week buffer of crude and fuel stocks.

- **Emergency Regulatory Measures:** The government has invoked the **Essential Commodities Act** to mandate that refiners maximize LPG production for domestic households, prioritizing it over petrochemical use, as 80% of LPG imports transit through the conflict zone.

- **Sectoral Gas Reprioritization:** Anticipating a squeeze in LNG deliveries (50% of which pass through Hormuz), the government is preparing to reallocate domestic natural gas to critical sectors like fertilizers and power while encouraging others to switch to alternative fuels.

Key Definitions

- **Strait of Hormuz:** A narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman; it is the world's most important oil transit chokepoint.

- **Current Account Deficit (CAD):** A measurement of a country's trade where the value of the goods and services it imports exceeds the value of the products it exports.

- **Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR):** Emergency fuel storage of crude oil maintained by a country to safeguard against supply disruptions.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Provides the central government powers to control the production, supply, and distribution of specific commodities (like petroleum and its products) to ensure availability at fair prices.

- **Article 73:** Extends the executive power of the Union to matters with respect to which Parliament has power to make laws, including international relations and energy security.

- **National Policy on Biofuels, 2018:** While not a direct legal provision for the crisis, it serves as the long-term legal framework to reduce import dependency through 20% ethanol blending.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Import Dependency:** India's reliance on foreign oil has climbed to 88%, making it one of the top three most vulnerable Asian economies (alongside Thailand and South Korea).

- **Price Freeze Policy:** Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) oil retailers are maintaining stable pump prices to blunt immediate "imported inflation," absorbing losses during global spikes to protect the domestic consumer base.

- **Global Coordination:** G7 countries are considering a coordinated release of **400 million barrels** from global SPRs to stabilize the $120/barrel peak seen during the onset of the escalation.

Conclusion

The escalating conflict in West Asia underscores the fragility of India's energy matrix. While short-term measures like diversification and the invocation of emergency acts can manage immediate shortages, the crisis highlights the urgent need for India to accelerate its transition toward renewable energy and enhance its domestic Strategic Petroleum Reserves to ensure long-term economic resilience against geopolitical shocks.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests (West Asia conflict impact).

- **GS Paper III:** Energy security, Infrastructure, and Indian Economy (Inflation, CAD, and import dependency).

- **Prelims:** Location-based geography (Strait of Hormuz, Persian Gulf), Essential Commodities Act, and Macroeconomic indicators (CAD/GDP ratios).

3. India's Diplomatic Response to the West Asia Crisis

- **Overriding Priority of Human Safety:** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar emphasized that the protection and evacuation of Indian nationals in the conflict zone remains the government's foremost objective, given the high concentration of the Indian diaspora in West Asia.

- **Strategic Energy and Trade Interests:** Ensuring the continuity of energy security and unhindered trade flows remains a "paramount" interest, especially as regional instability threatens maritime routes and oil supply chains vital to the Indian economy.

- **Engagement with New Leadership:** Following the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a U.S.-Israel strike, India is seeking to establish high-level contact with the newly appointed Supreme Leader, Mojtaba Khamenei, to ensure diplomatic continuity.

- **Complex Maritime Diplomacy:** The Minister revealed that Iran had requested docking permissions for naval ships prior to the sinking of the IRIS Dena near Sri Lanka, highlighting the precarious nature of maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

- **Bilateral and Multilateral Balancing:** India is maintaining active communication with both the U.S. and Iran, reflecting its "Strategic Autonomy" approach—balancing its partnership with Washington while maintaining traditional ties with Tehran.

- **Leadership Transition in Iran:** The appointment of 57-year-old Mojtaba Khamenei by the Assembly of Experts marks a significant shift in the Islamic Republic's hierarchy, potentially impacting the geopolitical orientation of the region.

Key Definitions

- **Suo Motu Statement:** A Latin term meaning "on its own motion"; in Parliament, it refers to a statement made by a Minister on a matter of urgent public importance without being prompted by a question.

- **Strategic Autonomy:** A foreign policy doctrine where a nation makes decisions based on its own national interests without being unduly influenced by other states or being part of formal military alliances.

- **Assembly of Experts:** A powerful Iranian body of 88 clerics responsible for appointing, supervising, and—theoretically—dismissing the Supreme Leader.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- **Article 73:** Specifies the extent of the executive power of the Union, which includes entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries and representing India internationally.

- **Entry 10, List I (Seventh Schedule):** Grants the Union Parliament exclusive power over "Foreign Affairs; all matters which bring the Union into relation with any foreign country."

- **Entry 14, List I (Seventh Schedule):** Power to enter into and implement treaties, agreements, and conventions with foreign countries.

- **Passports Act, 1967:** The legal basis for the government's obligation to assist and protect Indian citizens abroad during crises.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Evacuation History:** India has a robust track record of "Vande Bharat" style missions (e.g., Operation Ganga, Operation Kaveri) which serve as the template for potential actions in West Asia.

- **The "Hormuz" Factor:** With 1/5th of global oil passing through the Strait of Hormuz, India's diplomatic outreach is essential to prevent a total blockade that would spike domestic inflation.

- **Security in IOR:** The torpedoing of IRIS Dena off Sri Lanka indicates the conflict has spilled into India's immediate maritime neighborhood, necessitating heightened vigil by the Indian Navy.

Conclusion

India's diplomatic maneuvering amidst the Iran-Israel-U.S. escalation reflects a pragmatic blend of "Realpolitik" and humanitarian concern. By prioritizing the safety of its diaspora and the stability of energy corridors while navigating a transition in Iranian leadership, New Delhi aims to insulate its domestic economy from a volatile external environment. The situation underscores the necessity of maintaining "Multi-alignment" in an increasingly polarized global order.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Indian Diaspora.

- **GS Paper III:** Security challenges and their management in border areas; Linkages of organized crime with terrorism (maritime security).

- **Prelims:** Geography of West Asia (Strait of Hormuz, Persian Gulf), Constitutional provisions regarding Foreign Affairs, and International Relations terminology.

4. Revised Guidelines for Look Out Circulars (LOCs)

- **Restriction on Statutory Bodies:** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has barred bodies without criminal jurisdiction—including the NHRC, NCW, NCPCR, and NCLT—from directly requesting the Bureau of Immigration (BoI) to issue LOCs.

- **Mandatory Routing:** All requests from these statutory commissions must now be routed through authorized law enforcement agencies (LEAs), such as the police, who will evaluate the necessity based on criminal legal standards.

- **Standardized LOC Categories:** The MHA has introduced three specific action categories in the LOC proforma: "detain and inform originator," "prevent departure and inform originator," and "see remarks for action" (reserved largely for counter-terrorism).

- **Verification of Court Orders:** To prevent the use of forged documents at border checkpoints, the BoI will no longer accept quashing or suspension orders directly from individuals; such orders must be verified and communicated via the original seeking agency.

- **Strict Custody Timelines:** A new protocol requires the originating agency to take custody of a detained individual within 24 hours of detection at an Integrated Check Post (ICP), failing which the person is handed over to local police.

- **Counter-Terrorism Exemption:** Intelligence agencies like IB, R&AW, and NIA are granted specific discretion under the "see remarks" category to handle sensitive national security and counter-terrorism cases.

Key Definitions

- **Look Out Circular (LOC):** A notice used by law enforcement agencies to check whether a person traveling internationally is wanted by the police, an investigating agency, or a court.

- **Originator:** The specific agency (e.g., CBI, State Police, SFIO) that initially requests the Bureau of Immigration to open an LOC against an individual.

- **Integrated Check Post (ICP):** A sanitary, specialized facility at border crossings that houses customs, immigration, and border security to facilitate the movement of people and goods.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- **Article 21:** The Right to Life and Personal Liberty. The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that the right to travel abroad is a fundamental right under Article 21, and any restriction via an LOC must be "fair, just, and reasonable."

- **Article 14:** Right to Equality. The routing of LOCs through specific agencies ensures that arbitrary requests by various tribunals do not infringe upon the equal protection of laws.

- **Passport Act, 1967:** Section 10(3) allows the impounding or revocation of passports, providing the underlying legal basis for preventing a person from leaving the country.

- **Section 41 of CrPC:** Empowers police officers to arrest without a warrant, which often intersects with the "detain" instruction in an LOC.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Bureau of Immigration (BoI):** Functioning under the MHA, it acts as the central nodal agency for executing LOCs at all 37 International Airports and various land/sea ports.

- **Due Process:** The seven-day response window for originators to update LOC status following court orders is designed to reduce prolonged harassment of citizens whose legal cases have been resolved.

- **Judicial Oversight:** High Courts in India (notably Delhi and Bombay) have recently criticized the "mechanical" issuance of LOCs, prompting the MHA to streamline these administrative safeguards.

Conclusion

The MHA's decision to centralize LOC requests through agencies with criminal jurisdiction represents a shift toward protecting civil liberties while maintaining national security. By stripping non-investigative statutory bodies of direct issuance powers, the government is ensuring that "Right to Travel" is not curtailed by administrative overreach, but rather by standardized legal procedures that can stand judicial scrutiny.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory, and various quasi-judicial bodies; Fundamental Rights (Article 21); Governance and executive accountability.

- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security; Border Management.

- **Prelims:** Functions of NHRC/NCW/NCLT, powers of the Bureau of Immigration, and legal provisions governing international travel.

5. Suspension of AI-Based Near-Real-Time Deforestation Monitoring

- **Halt of Anavaran System:** The Forest Survey of India (FSI) has suspended its fortnightly deforestation alerts issued via the "Anavaran" portal, which had been operational since January 2024. The system has not been updated since November 2025, with officials describing it as a pilot project currently under utility assessment.

- **Technological Edge:** Anavaran utilized Machine Learning (ML) and satellite data from Sentinel-2 (optical) and Sentinel-1 (Synthetic Aperture Radar) to detect forest cover loss at a high spatial resolution of 10-20 meters. This provided "near-real-time" alerts compared to global systems like Terra-I, which often operate at lower resolutions.

- **Operational Impact:** During its 22-month run, the system issued over 12,000 alerts. Data indicates that deforestation peaks during the November-March period due to favorable weather for manmade activities. States like Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, and Arunachal Pradesh recorded the highest number of alerts.

AI-based forest iJharkhand forests, Dalma dalma

- **Methodology of Detection:** The algorithm used Google Earth Engine to compare current images with historical reference values for the same month. Any significant deviation flagged a unique patch of deforestation, sending precise coordinates to state forest departments for field verification.

- **Synergy with Van Agni:** The deforestation alert system was modeled after the successful 'Van Agni' portal for forest fires. While the fire alert system has been refined over two decades, the deforestation module was intended to be the next logical step in leveraging satellite-based conservation.

- **Conservation Gaps:** Experts highlight that the suspension creates a monitoring vacuum, as state forest departments relied on these automated alerts to bypass the limitations of manual patrolling in remote and dense terrains.

Key Definitions

- **Anavaran-Deforestation Alert System:** A satellite-based monitoring tool developed by the FSI to provide fortnightly location-specific alerts on forest cover change using remote sensing.

- **Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR):** A form of radar used to create 2D or 3D reconstructions of objects; it is crucial for forest monitoring as it can "see" through clouds and smoke, unlike optical sensors.

- **Spatial Resolution:** Refers to the size of the smallest feature that can be detected by a satellite sensor; 10-meter resolution means each pixel represents a 10m x 10m area on the ground.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- **Article 48A:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that mandates the State to endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.

- **Article 51A(g):** A Fundamental Duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.

- **Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980:** The primary legislation regulating the diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes; real-time monitoring is essential to detect illegal diversions under this Act.

- **The Indian Forest Act, 1927:** Provides the legal framework for the protection of Reserved and Protected forests, where the FSI's alerts act as evidentiary support for enforcement.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **State Performance:** Significant deforestation activity was noted in the Northeast (Arunachal, Nagaland, Manipur), highlighting the region's vulnerability to shifting cultivation and infrastructure projects.

- **Sentinel Satellites:** Part of the European Space Agency's (ESA) Copernicus programme, these satellites provide the open-access data that fuels India's FSI monitoring capabilities.

- **Machine Learning Utility:** ML allows for the automated filtering of seasonal changes (like deciduous leaf fall) versus actual forest clearing, reducing false positives in alerts.

Conclusion

The pause in the Anavaran system represents a temporary setback in India's transition toward data-driven environmental governance. While the FSI evaluates the pilot's utility, the high volume of alerts generated suggests that automated, high-resolution monitoring is no longer a luxury but a necessity for forest protection. Reinstating and refining this AI-led tool is vital for India to meet its international commitments under the Paris Agreement and the Bonn Challenge.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Environment and Biodiversity (Conservation); Science and Technology (Applications of Remote Sensing and AI); Internal Security (Enforcement of forest laws).

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory and Quasi-judicial bodies (Forest Survey of India).

- **Prelims:** India State of Forest Report (ISFR), Satellite missions (Sentinel, RISAT), and legal provisions of the Forest Conservation Act.

6. Removal of Two-Child Norm in Rajasthan Panchayati Raj

- **Legislative Amendment:** The Rajasthan Assembly passed the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2026, to scrap the 1995 provision that disqualified candidates with more than two children from contesting local body elections.

- **Modification of Eligibility:** The Bill specifically amends Section 19 of the Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act, 1994, removing a long-standing barrier for individuals seeking to lead village panchayats and urban local bodies.

- **Demographic Rationale:** The state government justified the move by citing a significant decline in the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) from 3.6 in the 1990s to the current 2.0, arguing that the restrictive "population control measure" is no longer relevant.

- **Inclusivity in Governance:** The "Statement of Objects and Reasons" highlights that the norm excluded many capable leaders with a vision for rural development, thereby limiting the democratic pool of candidates in grassroots governance.

- **Political Contention:** The opposition has questioned the reversal, citing concerns over a potential lack of population awareness in rural areas and alleging that the government is delaying pending panchayat polls despite High Court orders.

- **Socio-Economic Factors:** Government representatives attributed the success in population stabilization to increased women's literacy, better healthcare access, and general social change, rather than just electoral disqualification.

Key Definitions

- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR):** The average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime if she were to experience the current age-specific fertility rates through her reproductive years.

- **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs):** A system of local self-government in India introduced by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992, to build democracy at the grassroots level.

- **Voice Vote:** A parliamentary procedure where the presiding officer asks the members to say "Aye" or "No" to a proposal, and the result is determined based on the volume of the responses.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 243-F:** Deals with the disqualifications for membership in a Panchayat. It states that a person shall be disqualified if he is so disqualified by or under any law made by the Legislature of the State.

- **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992:** Granted constitutional status to PRIs. While it provides a basic framework, it leaves the specifics of election eligibility and disqualifications to the respective State Legislatures.

- **Article 243-K:** Mandates the State Election Commission to conduct elections to the Panchayats.

- **Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 40):** Mandates the State to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Historical Context:** The two-child norm was a part of "coercive" population policies adopted by several Indian states in the 1990s to meet national family planning goals.

- **Judicial Perspective:** In the past (e.g., *Javed v. State of Haryana, 2003*), the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the two-child norm as a reasonable restriction to promote family planning.

- **Current Trend:** Rajasthan joins other states that have recently reviewed or relaxed such norms in light of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) data showing India's TFR falling below the replacement level of 2.1.

Conclusion

The removal of the two-child norm in Rajasthan marks a significant shift from coercive population control to a more inclusive approach to grassroots democracy. By acknowledging the drop in fertility rates through social development rather than legislative restriction, the state is expanding the democratic space for rural leadership, though the move remains debated regarding its long-term impact on population awareness.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

- **GS Paper I:** Population and associated issues; Social empowerment.

- **Prelims:** 73rd and 74th Amendments, State Election Commission powers, and TFR data from NFHS.

7. The Geopolitical Shift in West Asia and India's Strategic Dilemma

- **Ideological Warfare and Regime Change:** Unlike previous conflicts focused on nuclear containment, the current U.S.-Israel campaign against Iran is fundamentally aimed at dismantling the "radical ideology" driving the Iranian state. The objective is a "regime change" to neutralize Iran's role as the "great disrupter" of West Asia and sever its support for non-state actors like Hezbollah, the Houthis, and Iraqi militias.

- **Iranian Strategy of Asymmetric Escalation:** Facing superior firepower, Iran has transitioned from "strategic restraint" to a widened conflict. By targeting regional infrastructure and U.S. security umbrellas in the Gulf, Iran is exposing the vulnerability of Gulf states and putting global energy security at risk to force an early American withdrawal.

- **Mixed Messaging from Washington:** While President Trump seeks a rapid resolution—modeled after "transactional" settlements in Venezuela or Syria—Iran's ability to disrupt the Strait of Hormuz makes a quick exit difficult. This has led to contradictory U.S. signals, including asking India to purchase more Russian oil to stabilize global prices amidst the volatility.

- **Regional Power Vacuum:** A significantly weakened Iran may empower other regional players like Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. This shift threatens to rewrite the security architecture of West Asia, potentially pushing Gulf states deeper into the U.S. security fold while creating new ambitions for intermediate powers.

- **Global Strategic Bandwidth:** The conflict distracts the U.S. from the Indo-Pacific, potentially emboldening Russia in Ukraine and China regarding Taiwan. For India, a distracted U.S. is counterproductive to its goal of securing greater American focus on the China-centric threats in the Indian Ocean.

- **Need for a Robust Regional Policy:** The crisis highlights that India's "aggregation of bilateral relations" is insufficient. A more proactive, balanced regional policy is required to manage contradictions between allies (e.g., Saudi-UAE tensions) and protect Indian investments like the Chabahar port amidst the intensifying West Asian chaos.

Key Definitions

- **Proxy War:** A conflict where third parties (often non-state actors) fight on behalf of or with the support of larger powers, who do not engage each other directly.

- **Regime Change:** The forced replacement of one government regime with another, often through military intervention or supported internal uprisings.

- **Strategic Restraint:** A policy of deliberately limiting the use of force or avoiding escalation in response to provocations, often to prevent a larger, more destructive conflict.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- **Article 51:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that mandates the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law.

- **The Passports Act, 1967:** Provides the legal framework for the Union government to regulate the travel of its citizens and ensure their protection abroad through diplomatic channels during foreign conflicts.

- **Allocation of Business Rules, 1961:** Governs how the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) manages foreign policy and represents India's interests in international forums like the UN.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Energy Security Vulnerability:** With the Strait of Hormuz at risk, India faces an "imported inflation" threat, as West Asian oil remains its primary energy source.

- **Abraham Accords:** These normalization agreements between Israel and Arab states (UAE, Bahrain) are being tested as the conflict forces Arab populations to reconcile normalization with regional instability.

- **The China-Russia Factor:** Both nations benefit from the U.S. being "bogged down" in a long-term West Asian conflict, reducing the pressure on their respective theaters of interest.

Conclusion

The Iran war represents a fundamental reordering of West Asian geopolitics. For India, the conflict is not merely a distant military engagement but a direct threat to its economic stability and strategic neighborhood. Moving beyond a "reactive" mode to a "proactive" regional policy is now essential to navigate the tightening space between U.S. demands, Chinese ambitions, and the volatility of West Asian power shifts.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Important International institutions.

- **GS Paper III:** Energy security; Linkages between development and spread of extremism (Proxy wars).

- **Prelims:** Mapping (Strait of Hormuz, Persian Gulf), International Relations (Abraham Accords, I2U2), and Indian Diaspora statistics.

8. Collapse of the Gulf Security Architecture and Lessons for India

- **Failure of External Security Guarantees:** The second week of the U.S.-Israel-Iran conflict has exposed the fragility of the "security umbrella" promised by the U.S. to Gulf monarchies. Despite decades of assurances, U.S. missile interceptors have reportedly run out, with supplies prioritized for Israel, leaving Gulf partners vulnerable to Iranian strikes on "safe" assets.

- **Geopolitical Realignment:** The crisis has sparked a sense of helplessness in the region, leading countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar to reconsider their alliance with Washington. Reports suggest these nations are exploring the removal of American military bases, potentially marking the most significant shift in regional security in 50 years.

- **Historical Context of Dependency:** The existing security arrangement dates back to the 1980 "Carter Doctrine," which viewed any attempt to control the Persian Gulf as an assault on vital U.S. interests. However, the failure of subsequent initiatives like the "Middle East Strategic Alliance" (MESA) has highlighted the unreliability of outsourced defense.

- **Iranian Counter-Offensive:** Iran has effectively expanded the war zone by targeting U.S. bases across the Gulf (Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, etc.) and closing the Strait of Hormuz. This asymmetric response has successfully challenged the perceived technological superiority of the joint U.S.-Israel offensive.

- **India's Path to Atma Nirbharta:** The conflict reinforces the importance of India's shift toward self-reliance in defense. Since 2014, India has aggressively reduced import percentages to 25%-30% and achieved record defense exports of ₹23,622 crore (approx. $2.78 billion) in FY 2024-25, mitigating the risks of supply chain disruptions during global crises.

- **Core Strategic Takeaway:** The primary lesson from the ongoing West Asian escalation is that national security is a sovereign responsibility that cannot be bought or outsourced; domestic industrial capacity and strategic autonomy are the only true safeguards against external aggression.

Key Definitions

- **Carter Doctrine:** A U.S. foreign policy initiative (1980) stating that the U.S. would use military force, if necessary, to defend its national interests in the Persian Gulf region.

- **Strategic Autonomy:** The ability of a state to pursue its national interests and adopt its preferred foreign policy without being constrained by other states or dependent on external powers for its security.

- **Asymmetric Warfare:** A type of conflict where the relative military power of belligerents differs significantly, and the weaker party uses unconventional tactics (e.g., closing maritime chokepoints) to exploit the stronger party's vulnerabilities.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- **Article 51:** Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that guides India's international relations, emphasizing the promotion of international peace and security.

- **Seventh Schedule (List I, Entry 1 & 2):** Grants the Union Government exclusive power over the "Defence of India" and the "Naval, military and air forces; any other armed forces of the Union."

- **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020:** The legal and administrative framework designed to promote "Make in India" in the defense sector by prioritizing indigenous design and manufacturing (IDDM).

- **The Aircraft Act, 1934 & Arms Act, 1959:** Provide the regulatory basis for the manufacturing and export of military hardware and ammunition within India.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Supply Chain Vulnerability:** The depletion of interceptors in the Gulf highlights the "Just-in-Time" inventory risks in modern warfare, where demand far outstrips production capacity during active high-intensity conflicts.

- **Kargil Review Committee (1999):** The seminal report that first officially highlighted India's dangerous reliance on foreign arms and spearheaded the modern push for indigenous defense production.

- **Regional Strategic Shifts:** The potential "Arab NATO" or MESA failed largely due to intra-regional disputes (like the Qatar blockade), proving that external security umbrellas cannot resolve internal regional fractures.

Conclusion

The ongoing conflict in Iran serves as a stark warning to nations reliant on foreign security guarantees. For India, it validates the strategic necessity of the "Atma Nirbhar Bharat" initiative. The transition of the Gulf states from U.S. dependents to seekers of alternate security arrangements suggests a move toward a multipolar world where regional powers must develop indigenous military and technological depth to survive.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India.

- **GS Paper III:** Security challenges and their management in border areas; Indigenization of technology and developing new technology in the defense sector.

- **Prelims:** Mapping of the Persian Gulf (Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman), Carter Doctrine, and current trends in India's defense exports/imports.

9. Algorithmic Sovereignty: A Strategic Imperative for India

- **Structural Bias in AI Models:** Current frontier AI models are primarily trained on Western datasets, leading to a "Western accent" in their outputs. This results in the presentation of Western legal scholarship and naval doctrines as the global "default," while Global South perspectives are relegated to "alternative" status.

- **Interpretation of International Law (UNCLOS):** A significant rift exists regarding Article 58 of UNCLOS (Exclusive Economic Zones). The Western view allows expansive military activities (intelligence, combat), whereas India and the Global South argue that military maneuvers in an EEZ require coastal-state consent—a nuance often ignored by Western-centric AI.

- **Humanitarian Erasure:** AI systems frequently overlook non-Western legal obligations, such as the "duty to rescue" under Article 18 of the Second Geneva Convention. In the IRIS Dena incident, AI initially failed to recognize the legal failure of a vessel departing a scene without assisting shipwrecked sailors.

- **Risk of Digital Colonialism:** Reliance on the "U.S. AI stack" or "China AI stack" threatens India's strategic autonomy. Dependence on external foundational models means foreign algorithms govern India's data flows, set innovation boundaries, and mediate national knowledge production.

- **The Sovereign AI Stack:** Experts argue that India must move beyond being a "vendor of applications" to becoming a "producer of models." This requires indigenous compute power,

domestic datasets reflecting Indian languages/realities, and ownership of the "algorithmic layer" to prevent outsourcing national cognition.

- **Geopolitical Implications:** As policymakers increasingly turn to AI for decision-making, biased algorithmic interpretations can shift the discursive power in international relations, potentially undermining India's stances on territorial integrity and maritime security.

Key Definitions

- **Algorithmic Sovereignty:** The ability of a nation to develop, own, and control the algorithms, data architectures, and computing power that shape its digital and cognitive future.

- **UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea):** An international treaty that establishes a legal framework for all marine and maritime activities.

- **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):** An area of the sea in which a sovereign state has special rights regarding the exploration and use of marine resources, extending up to 200 nautical miles from its coast.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- **Article 51:** Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) promoting international peace, security, and respect for international law and treaty obligations.

- **Article 297:** Specifies that all lands, minerals, and other things of value underlying the ocean within the territorial waters, or the continental shelf, or the EEZ of India shall vest in the Union.

- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** The primary law in India dealing with cybercrime and electronic commerce, though it currently lacks comprehensive provisions for AI-specific sovereignty.

- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023:** Provides the framework for processing digital personal data, serving as a foundational step toward data sovereignty.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Strategic Autonomy:** Just as India developed the indigenous Space (ISRO) and Nuclear programs, a sovereign AI stack is viewed as the "third pillar" of 21st-century independence.

- **The "Deployment Gap":** Pragmatists argue India should focus on using Western engines to solve local problems (healthcare/agriculture), while sovereignty advocates warn this leads to long-term structural dependence.

- **Data as a Resource:** India's scale and linguistic diversity provide a unique "data refinery" that can be used to train models that are culturally and strategically aligned with the Global South.

Conclusion

The transition from being a passive consumer to a producer of AI models is a civilizational necessity for India. Without algorithmic sovereignty, India risks a new form of digital empire where its national narratives and legal interpretations are shaped by external code. Building an indigenous AI stack is not about isolationism (autarky) but about ensuring that India thinks through its own models rather than someone else's.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; International treaties (UNCLOS) and their interpretations.

- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; Indigenization of technology; Internal security challenges related to AI.

- **Essay/Ethics:** The bias in technology; Digital colonialism vs. Digital inclusion; Ethical implications of AI in governance.

10. Judicial Intervention in Electoral Roll Revision: The West Bengal Case

- **Supreme Court Intervention via Article 142:** On February 20, 2026, the Supreme Court invoked its extraordinary powers under Article 142 to deploy judicial officers from West Bengal, Odisha, and Jharkhand to adjudicate approximately 60 lakh pending cases related to the "Special Intensive Revision" (SIR) of electoral rolls.

- **Core Institutional Dispute:** The crisis was triggered by the Election Commission's (EC) submission that the West Bengal government failed to provide Group 'A' officers (SDOs/SDMs) for quasi-judicial functions. Instead, the deployment of lower-cadre clerical staff made the scrutiny of "logical discrepancies" and "unmapped cases" untenable.

Mamata vs EC over West Bengal SIR: A timeline

- **June 24:** EC announces phased nationwide SIR.
- **November 4:** SIR in West Bengal begins; BLOs start house-to-house enumeration.
- **December 16:** Draft electoral roll published; ~7.08 cr voters (58 lakh deletions).
- **December 19:** EC appoints 8,100 "micro-observers" for hearings in West Bengal.
- **February 2:** Mamata visits Delhi to protest SIR & meet CEC.
- **February 4:** Mamata appears in Supreme Court challenging SIR.
- **February 20:** Supreme Court orders judicial officers to decide pending cases (~60 lakh).
- **February 28:** Final electoral roll published: 6.44 cr voters; 60.06 lakh marked "under adjudication".
- **March 1:** Mamata's first reaction post final list release; calling deletions "shocking", "inhumane".

- **Conflict over Micro-Observers:** The state challenged the EC's deployment of Micro-Observers to assist Electoral Registration Officers (EROs), claiming it was legally unauthorized. The EC justified this as a necessary measure due to the state's non-cooperation in providing senior executive personnel.

- **Structural Dependency of EC:** The episode highlights a fundamental flaw in the Indian electoral framework—the EC lacks its own permanent field staff. Under Article 324, it must rely on personnel requisitioned from the Central and State governments, which can lead to executive interference or institutional friction.

- **Constituent Assembly Debate Echoes:** The current situation mirrors concerns raised by R.K. Sidhwa in the Constituent Assembly, who argued that staff drawn from provinces would remain beholden to the executive. This contrasts with Dr. Ambedkar's initial view that a permanent machinery would be an unnecessary financial burden.

- **Integrity of the Electoral Roll:** Despite the publication of the final roll on February 28, 2026, the inclusion of eligible names continues through supplementary lists based on judicial adjudication, ensuring that no genuine voter is disenfranchised due to administrative or political stalemates.

Key Definitions

- **Article 142:** Grants the Supreme Court the power to pass any decree or order necessary for doing "complete justice" in any cause or matter pending before it.

- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR):** A rigorous process undertaken by the EC to ensure the accuracy of electoral rolls by identifying logical errors, duplicates, and unmapped entries through house-to-house verification or technical scrutiny.

- **Electoral Registration Officer (ERO):** A statutory authority responsible for the preparation and revision of electoral rolls for an assembly or parliamentary constituency.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- **Article 324:** Vests the superintendence, direction, and control of elections in the Election Commission. Article 324(6) mandates that the President or Governor shall make available such staff as necessary for the EC to discharge its functions.

- **Representation of the People Act, 1950:** Provides the legal framework for the preparation of electoral rolls, the qualification of voters, and the appointment of registration officers.

- **Representation of the People Act, 1951:** Governs the actual conduct of elections and the administrative machinery required for the process.

- **Quasi-Judicial Functions:** The task of deciding whether a name should be included or excluded from the roll is a quasi-judicial process, requiring an unbiased application of law and scrutiny of evidence/documents.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Comparison with Other States:** While West Bengal faced a backlog of 60 lakh cases, states like Tamil Nadu and Kerala completed similar SIR exercises within prescribed timelines, indicating a specific breakdown of center-state coordination in Bengal.

- **Judicial Officer Deployment:** The deployment of judges to perform administrative-electoral tasks is rare and signifies the Court's lack of confidence in the neutrality or competence of the provided executive staff in this specific instance.

- **Continuous Updation:** Under Section 23 of the RP Act, 1950, names can be added to the roll until the last date of filing nominations, making the "final roll" a dynamic document.

Conclusion

The judicial takeover of electoral roll verification in West Bengal serves as a "wake-up call" for electoral reforms. It validates the long-standing demand for a permanent, independent secretariat or a dedicated cadre for the Election Commission. Relying on state-controlled staff for the foundational work of democracy—the voter list—creates a conflict of interest that only judicial intervention could resolve in this crisis.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies; Salient features of the Representation of People's Act; Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary and the Executive.

- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Institutional integrity; Conflict of interest in administrative duties; Neutrality of civil servants during elections.

- **Prelims:** Article 142, Article 324, Role of EROs/SDMs in elections, and landmark cases on electoral purity.

11. Musi Riverfront Development Project: Urban Rejuvenation vs. Human Displacement

- **Project Scope and Vision:** The Telangana government aims to transform the 55 km Hyderabad stretch of the Musi River from a seasonal sewage-filled channel into a perennial urban waterfront. The plan includes leisure spaces, heritage restoration, and a cultural precinct featuring a "world-tallest" Gandhi statue at the confluence of the Musa and Esi rivulets.

- **Hydrological Engineering:** To ensure year-round flow, the project proposes channeling 2.5 tmcft of water from the Godavari River via the Mallanna Sagar Reservoir into the twin flood-control reservoirs, Osman Sagar and Himayat Sagar.

- **Environmental Remediation:** Addressing the severe pollution levels, the government plans to add 39 new Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) to the existing 31, aiming to treat all urban discharge before it enters the river system.

- **Socio-Economic Conflict:** The project has faced intense backlash due to the forced eviction of slum dwellers from the riverbed. Activists under the "Musi Jan Andolan" umbrella criticize the government for prioritizing aesthetic development over the rehabilitation rights of long-term residents.

- **Funding and Administrative Status:** The first phase has received in-principle approval from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). However, controversy persists as land acquisition notifications were issued before the final Detailed Project Report (DPR) was made available for public scrutiny.

- **Geographical Context:** Originating in the Ananthagiri Hills, the Musi is a tributary of the Krishna River. Historically, it is known for the devastating 1908 floods, which led to the creation of the city's modern flood protection infrastructure.

Key Definitions

- **Perennial River:** A stream or river that has continuous flow in parts of its bed throughout the year during years of normal rainfall.

- **TMCFT:** Abbreviation for Thousand Million Cubic Feet, a unit of volume commonly used in India to measure the capacity of reservoirs and river flow.

- **Riverfront Development:** An urban planning approach that focuses on the ecological restoration and commercial/recreational enhancement of land adjacent to a river.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- **Article 21:** The Right to Life includes the right to a clean environment and, by judicial extension, the right to livelihood and shelter, which are central to the displacement debate.

- **The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 (LARR):** This Act mandates a social impact assessment and ensures that displaced persons are adequately compensated and resettled.

- **Article 48A:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that directs the State to endeavor to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife.

- **Article 51A(g):** A Fundamental Duty of citizens to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Historical Significance:** The 1908 Musi floods were a turning point for Hyderabad's urban planning, leading to the birth of the City Improvement Trust and planned drainage systems.

- **Inter-Basin Transfer:** The proposal to bring Godavari water to the Musi represents a significant inter-basin water transfer project, which has its own set of ecological and federal implications.

- **Consortium Approach:** The preparation of the DPR by a five-company consortium indicates an attempt to bring international urban design standards to the project.
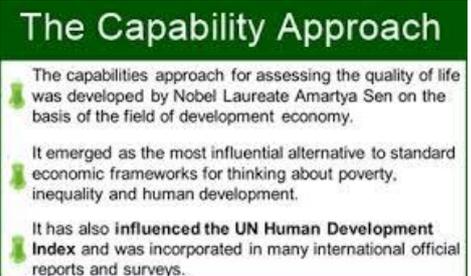
Conclusion

The Musi Riverfront Development Project represents a classic urban governance dilemma: the need for environmental restoration and modernization versus the protection of vulnerable communities. While the rejuvenation of a "dead" river is essential for Hyderabad's ecological health, the success of the project hinges on a "people-first" approach to resettlement and transparent administrative processes.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Geographical features and their location-changes in critical geographical features (rivers).

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation; Statutory and quasi-judicial bodies.

- **GS Paper III:** Conservation, environmental pollution, and degradation; Environmental impact assessment; Disaster management (urban flooding).

- **Prelims:** Tributaries of the Krishna River, Ananthagiri Hills, National River Conservation Plan (NRCP), and basics of the LARR Act.

12. Amartya Sen's Capabilities Approach to Development

- **Redefining Development:** In Amartya Sen's framework, development is viewed as the expansion of "substantive freedoms" (capabilities) that allow individuals to lead lives they have reason to value, moving beyond narrow economic metrics like GDP or per capita income.

The Capability Approach

The capabilities approach for assessing the quality of life was developed by Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen on the basis of the field of development economy.

It emerged as the most influential alternative to standard economic frameworks for thinking about poverty, inequality and human development.

It has also **influenced the UN Human Development Index** and was incorporated in many international official reports and surveys.

- **Capabilities vs. Functionings:** Sen distinguishes between "capabilities" (the real opportunity to achieve) and "functionings" (the actual achievements or "beings and doings" like being well-nourished), emphasizing that the freedom to choose is as morally important as the outcome itself.

- **Agency-Centric Model:** The approach shifts the focus from treating people as passive "beneficiaries" of state largesse to recognizing them as active "agents" of change whose voices and participation are central to the development process.

- **Critique of Skill Reductionism:** Sen cautions against reducing education to mere "human capital" or job-market skill formation; true education must foster critical thinking and the "equality of autonomy" necessary for meaningful democratic participation.

- **Niti vs. Nyaya:** A crucial distinction in Sen's theory of justice is between *niti* (the fitness of institutions and formal rules) and *nyaya* (the realization of justice in the actual lives of people), arguing that institutional design is insufficient if it does not produce lived justice.

- **Contemporary Challenges:** In the era of "post-truth" politics and AI, the erosion of critical reasoning and the convergence of state-market interests (plutocratic populism) threaten the enabling conditions required for capabilities to flourish, leading to a disconnect between theory and practice.

Key Definitions

- **Capabilities:** The various combinations of functionings (beings and doings) that a person can achieve; it represents the freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations.

- **Human Capital:** An instrumental view of humans as a means of production through skill and education, whereas the **Capability Approach** views human life as an end in itself.

- **Substantive Freedom:** The actual ability or opportunity to do something, as opposed to formal legal rights that a person may not have the resources or health to exercise.

Constitutional & Legal Framework

- **Article 21:** The Right to Life and Personal Liberty. The Supreme Court has expanded this to include the "right to live with dignity," mirroring Sen's idea that life is more than mere animal existence.

- **Directive Principles of State Policy (Part IV):** Articles 38 and 39 mandate the State to secure a social order for the promotion of the welfare of the people and minimize inequalities in status and opportunity.

- **Fundamental Duties (Article 51A):** Specifically 51A(h), which mandates the development of "scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry," aligning with the capability to think and reason.

- **Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009:** A legal manifestation of providing the capability of literacy, though Sen's approach would further evaluate the *quality* of reasoning it produces.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Collaboration with Mahbub ul Haq:** This approach was instrumental in creating the **Human Development Index (HDI)**, which ranks countries based on health, education, and income rather than just wealth.

- **Difference with Martha Nussbaum:** Unlike Nussbaum, who proposed a "central list" of 10 functional capabilities, Sen leaves the list open-ended to avoid paternalism and allow for democratic deliberation.

- **Public Reasoning:** Sen emphasizes that the "priority" of which capabilities matter most should be decided through open public debate, making democracy a constituent part of development.

Conclusion

The Capabilities Approach serves as a powerful corrective to economic reductionism by placing human freedom at the heart of progress. However, its effectiveness in India is currently challenged by a "post-truth" environment and a governance model that prioritizes technical skill over critical agency. For India to truly develop, it must bridge the gap between *niti* (institutional rules) and *nyaya* (actualized justice), ensuring that education and policy foster not just workers, but free-thinking citizens.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Social empowerment; Poverty and developmental issues.

- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Human Values; Concept of Justice (John Rawls vs. Amartya Sen); Philosophical basis of governance.

- **Essay:** Frequently used as a foundational framework for topics on Education, Women Empowerment, and the Philosophy of Development.