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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY
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STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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1. Economic Stabilisation Fund & Supplementary Demands for Grants

- **Strategic Fiscal Buffer:** The Union Government has allocated ₹57,381 crore toward a newly designated 'Economic Stabilisation Fund' to counter "global headwinds," specifically addressing volatility in oil prices (near \$100/barrel) and supply chain disruptions from the West Asia conflict.
- **Supplementary Expenditure:** The Lok Sabha approved the Second Supplementary Demand for Grants involving a gross additional spending of ₹2.81 lakh crore, with a net cash outgo of ₹2.01 lakh crore after accounting for ₹80,000 crore in additional receipts.
- **Fiscal Deficit Commitment:** Despite the increased spending, the Finance Ministry maintains that the fiscal deficit target for the 2025-26 period remains on track, signaling a commitment to the fiscal consolidation roadmap.
- **Macroeconomic Resilience:** The fund is designed as a proactive "fiscal headroom" to protect sub-sectors of the Indian economy from unanticipated external shocks and to ensure the post-COVID-19 recovery remains uninterrupted.
- **Legislative Approval:** The appropriation of these funds followed a mandatory parliamentary debate, emphasizing the constitutional requirement for executive accountability over the Consolidated Fund of India.
- **Focus on Energy Security:** A significant driver for this allocation is the "oil shock" and potential energy shortages, ensuring that domestic prices and industrial inputs remain insulated from global geopolitical instability.

Key Definitions & Concepts

- **Supplementary Demand for Grants:** A request presented to Parliament when the amount authorized by the Appropriation Act for a particular service is found to be insufficient for the current financial year.
- **Fiscal Headroom:** The flexibility in a government's budget that allows it to provide resources for a desired purpose without jeopardizing the sustainability of its financial position or the stability of the economy.
- **Global Headwinds:** External economic conditions (e.g., wars, pandemics, global inflation) that threaten to slow down domestic economic growth.
- **Net Cash Outgo:** The actual additional expenditure that requires fresh funds from the Consolidated Fund of India, excluding the amounts met through savings or enhanced receipts.

Emergency response
The Lok Sabha on Friday passed the Centre's Second Supplementary Demand for Grants

- Approval sought for gross additional expenditure of around **₹2.81 lakh crore**
- Savings and receipts aggregates to around **₹80,000 crore**
- Around **₹2.01 lakh crore** net cash outgo for additional expenditures

I want to highlight the point that the proposed Economic Stabilisation Fund will provide fiscal headroom to allow India to respond to the global headwinds

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN
Union Finance Minister

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 115:** Governs Supplementary, additional, or excess grants. It stipulates that if the amount authorized for a service is insufficient, the President shall cause to be laid before Parliament another statement showing the estimated amount of that expenditure.
- **Article 114:** Pertains to the Appropriation Bill, ensuring no money is withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund of India except under appropriation made by law.



- **FRBM Act, 2003:** The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act provides the legal framework for the government's fiscal consolidation roadmap, which the Finance Minister referenced regarding the deficit targets.

Additional Key Points for Examination

- **Counter-Cyclical Fiscal Policy:** The creation of an Economic Stabilisation Fund is a classic example of a counter-cyclical measure, where the government builds buffers to use during periods of economic downturn or external volatility.
- **Resource Mobilization:** The government highlighted ₹80,000 crore in additional receipts, likely stemming from higher-than-expected tax buoyancy or non-tax revenues, which mitigates the impact of the extra spending on the deficit.

Conclusion

The establishment of the Economic Stabilisation Fund represents a shift toward "pre-emptive fiscalism." By securing parliamentary approval for a multi-thousand-crore buffer, the government aims to balance the need for aggressive growth with the reality of an increasingly volatile global geopolitical landscape. The move reinforces India's strategy of maintaining domestic stability even when global energy and supply chains are under duress.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Parliament and State Legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges (Budgetary process, Articles 112-117).
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Government Budgeting; Fiscal Policy.
- **Prelims Link:** Constitutional Articles related to Grants (115, 116); Difference between Supplementary, Additional, and Excess Grants; Fiscal Deficit vs. Primary Deficit.

2. Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026: Prohibiting Unlawful Conversions

- **Objective and Scope:** The Maharashtra government has introduced the "Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026" to prohibit religious conversions carried out through coercion, fraud, inducement, or marriage, aiming to protect the fundamental right to freedom of religion.
- **Stringent Penalties:** The draft law proposes rigorous punishment for violations, including imprisonment for up to 10 years and a maximum fine of ₹7 lakh, specifically targeting forcible or deceptive conversions.
- **Broad Definition of Allurement:** The Bill defines "allurement" extensively to include gifts, easy money, employment, free education in religious institutions, promises of a better lifestyle, "divine healing," or the glorification of one religion over another.
- **Legal Status of Marriages:** Any marriage solemnized with the primary intent of unlawful conversion shall be declared null and void by a court upon a petition filed by either party involved.
- **Rights of Children:** Children born from relationships involving unlawful conversion will be deemed to belong to the mother's original religion, and custody will generally remain with the mother unless a court directs otherwise.
- **Reporting Mechanism:** The Bill mandates that police must register complaints filed not only by the converted person but also by parents, siblings, or any person related by blood, marriage, or adoption.



Key Definitions

- **Unlawful Conversion:** Any conversion from one religion to another accomplished by misrepresentation, force, undue influence, coercion, allurement, or by any fraudulent means or by marriage.
- **Inducement/Allurement:** Under this Bill, it includes material benefits (cash/kind), employment, free education, or even "divine healing" and "promising a better lifestyle."
- **Coercion:** The practice of persuading someone to do something by using force or threats.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 25:** Guarantees the freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice, and propagate religion. However, the Supreme Court in the *Stainislaus vs. State of Madhya Pradesh (1977)* case held that the right to "propagate" does not include the right to "convert" another person.
- **Article 26:** Gives every religious denomination the right to manage its own affairs in matters of religion, subject to public order, morality, and health.
- **Entry 1, State List (Schedule VII):** "Public Order" is a State subject, which provides the constitutional basis for State legislatures to enact laws regulating religious conversions to prevent communal disharmony.
- **Special Marriage Act, 1954:** A central legislation that allows for inter-faith marriages without the need for religious conversion, often cited in debates surrounding state anti-conversion laws.



Additional Key Points

- **Burden of Proof:** Similar to laws in Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat, the burden of proving that a conversion was not forced often shifts to the person who has converted or the person who facilitated the conversion.
- **Prior Intimation:** Many such state laws require individuals intending to convert, and the priest performing the ceremony, to give prior notice (usually 30 to 60 days) to the District Magistrate.
- **Judicial Scrutiny:** The Supreme Court is currently examining the constitutional validity of similar "Love Jihad" laws passed by other states, focusing on whether they infringe upon the right to privacy and the right to choose a partner (referencing the *Hadiya Case/Shafin Jahan vs. Asokan K.M.*).

Conclusion

The Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026, joins a growing list of Indian states seeking to regulate religious conversions through legislative means. While the government frames the Bill as a measure to protect vulnerable individuals from exploitation and "allurement," critics argue it may infringe upon individual autonomy, the right to privacy, and the secular fabric of the Constitution. The judicial outcome of pending challenges in the Supreme Court will ultimately determine the legal boundaries of such state-led interventions in personal faith and marital choices.

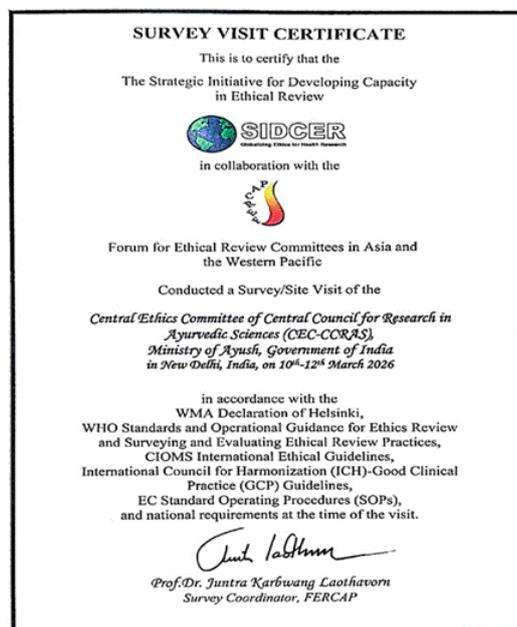


UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Fundamental Rights (Articles 25-28), Separation of Powers, and the role of the Judiciary in protecting civil liberties. Issues related to the "Right to Privacy" and "Right to choose a life partner."
- **GS Paper I (Social Issues):** Communalism, Secularism, and the impact of state legislation on social harmony and minority rights.
- **Prelims Link:** Constitutional Articles 25-28, Seventh Schedule (State List vs. Concurrent List), and landmark Supreme Court judgments like *Rev. Stainislaus* and *Puttaswamy (Right to Privacy)*.

3. SIDCER-FERCAP Evaluation of CEC-CCRAS: Global Standards in Ayush Research

- **Historic Milestone:** The Central Ethics Committee (CEC) of the Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS) has become the first ethics committee in the Ayush sector to undergo an international evaluation by SIDCER-FERCAP.
- **International Accreditation:** The evaluation was conducted between March 9 and 12, 2026, by a team of international and national surveyors to benchmark ethical review processes against global standards.
- **Objective of Evaluation:** The primary goal is to enhance the protection of human research participants while ensuring the quality, transparency, and accountability of health research within the Ayurvedic domain.
- **Expansion of Standards:** While 17 Indian institutions in contemporary medical sciences have previously undergone this review, this move integrates traditional medicine research into the global framework of ethical governance.
- **Strategic Initiative:** The SIDCER-FERCAP foundation focuses on capacity building and continuous quality improvement, promoting a rigorous assessment of operational standards in health research.
- **Model for Ayush Ecosystem:** This initiative is expected to serve as a benchmark for other premier Ayush institutions, elevating the credibility of Indian traditional medicine research on the global stage.



Key Definitions

- **CCRAS:** The apex body in India for formulation, coordination, development, and promotion of research on scientific lines in Ayurveda, functioning under the Ministry of Ayush.
- **SIDCER-FERCAP:** The Strategic Initiative for Developing Capacity in Ethical Review (SIDCER) and the Forum for Ethical Review Committees in the Asian and Western Pacific Region (FERCAP) are international bodies dedicated to strengthening ethical health research.



- **Ethical Review Committee (ERC):** An independent body constituted of medical/scientific and non-scientific members, whose responsibility it is to ensure the protection of the rights, safety, and well-being of human subjects involved in a trial.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 47:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that mandates the State to regard the improvement of public health as among its primary duties, providing the foundational basis for health research.
- **New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019:** These rules under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940, govern the clinical trial requirements and ethical standards for all medical research in India, including Ayush.
- **National Ethical Guidelines (ICMR):** The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) provides the "National Ethical Guidelines for Biomedical and Health Research Involving Human Participants," which serve as the primary legal and ethical reference for committees like CEC-CCRAS.
- **Ministry of Ayush Guidelines:** Specific regulatory frameworks designed to validate traditional knowledge through evidence-based scientific research without compromising the core principles of Ayurveda.

Additional Key Points

- **Global Credibility:** By aligning with SIDCER-FERCAP, CCRAS aims to address global skepticism regarding the scientific rigor of traditional medicine.
- **Human Participant Protection:** The evaluation scrutinizes the informed consent process, risk-benefit analysis, and the independence of the ethics committee from the researchers.
- **Digital Integration:** The review likely encompasses the transparency of data management and the digitization of ethical clearances to prevent manipulation in research outcomes.

Conclusion

The international evaluation of CEC-CCRAS marks a paradigm shift in how traditional medicine research is perceived and practiced in India. By subjecting itself to the rigorous standards of SIDCER-FERCAP, the Ministry of Ayush is signaling its intent to move toward evidence-based medicine that is ethically sound and globally competitive. This benchmark will not only protect participants but also ensure that the results of Ayurvedic clinical trials are accepted by the international scientific community, fostering a more inclusive global healthcare system.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies; Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.
- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; Achievements of Indians in science & technology; Indigenization of technology.
- **Prelims Link:** Functions of CCRAS and Ministry of Ayush; Difference between SIDCER and ICMR guidelines; Constitutional provisions related to health (Entry 6, State List; Entry 25, Concurrent List).



4. Bharat-VISTAAR: Revolutionizing Digital Public Infrastructure in Agriculture

- **Unified Digital Platform:** Launched in Phase-I on February 17, 2026, Bharat-VISTAAR (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources) is a nationwide, AI-powered, voice-first Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) designed to provide real-time, location-specific agricultural advisories.
- **Budgetary Allocation & Multilingual Reach:** Introduced in the Union Budget 2026-27 with an allocation of ₹150 crore, the platform is currently available in Hindi and English, with plans to expand to 9 additional regional languages within the next six months.
- **Core Functionality:** The tool leverages Artificial Intelligence to deliver personalized insights on crop management, weather patterns, market prices, soil health, and pest alerts by integrating data from the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) and other scientific sources.
- **Inclusive Access Channels:** To ensure the inclusion of small and marginal farmers, the platform is accessible via a dedicated toll-free number (155261), an Interactive Voice Response System (IVRS) for non-smartphone users, a web portal, and a mobile application.
- **Integration of Central Schemes:** Phase-I streamlines access to 10 major schemes, including PM-KISAN, PMFBY (Fasal Bima), Kisan Credit Card (KCC), Soil Health Card, and the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), creating a single-window service delivery model.
- **Data Security and Privacy:** The platform is built in strict compliance with the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, and MeitY cybersecurity guidelines, featuring periodic audits by CERT-In to ensure robust data sovereignty for farmers.



Key Definitions

- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** A shared digital network (like Aadhaar or UPI) that enables the delivery of public and private services at a societal scale.
- **Voice-First AI:** A technology interface where the primary mode of interaction is through spoken language, crucial for bypassing literacy barriers in rural populations.
- **IVRS (Interactive Voice Response System):** A technology that allows humans to interact with a computer-operated phone system through the use of voice and DTMF tones input via a keypad.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 38:** Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) directing the State to secure a social order for the promotion of the welfare of the people and minimize inequalities in income and status.
- **Entry 14, State List (Schedule VII):** Agriculture, including agricultural education and research; however, the Union provides support through DPI and central schemes under economic and social planning (Concurrent List).
- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023:** The primary legal framework ensuring that the personal data of farmers processed by the Bharat-VISTAAR platform is handled with consent, transparency, and accountability.



- **IT Act, 2000:** Provides the legal recognition for electronic governance and sets the standards for cyber security and data protection in India.

Additional Key Points for Examination

- **Bridging the Digital Divide:** By providing IVRS and voice-based AI, Bharat-VISTAAR addresses the "last-mile" connectivity issue for farmers who do not own smartphones or have limited internet literacy.
- **Scientific Agriculture:** The integration with ICAR ensures that the "Lab-to-Land" transition is accelerated, providing farmers with evidence-based practices rather than traditional trial-and-error methods.
- **Convergence of Services:** The platform acts as a "Super App" for agriculture, reducing the administrative burden on farmers who previously had to navigate multiple portals for different subsidies and insurance claims.

Conclusion

Bharat-VISTAAR represents a significant leap in India's journey toward "Digital Agriculture." By combining Artificial Intelligence with the principles of Digital Public Infrastructure, the government is not just providing information but is empowering the agrarian community with a tool for precision farming. Its success will depend on its ability to effectively scale into regional dialects and maintain the trust of users through stringent data privacy measures, eventually transforming Indian agriculture from a subsistence-based model to a data-driven, profitable enterprise.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; E-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential.
- **GS Paper III:** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System; Technology missions; e-technology in the aid of farmers.
- **Prelims Link:** Names of schemes integrated (PM-KISAN, PMFBY, etc.); Features of DPDP Act 2023; Role of ICAR; Understanding of DPI and AI-based governance tools.

5. Status of Soil Health Indicators and Government Interventions

- **Nutrient Profile Trends:** Recent data from the Soil and Land Use Survey of India (at scales of 1:50,000 and 1:10,000) indicates that while Indian soils are generally sufficient in Potassium, there is significant variability in Nitrogen and Phosphorus levels across regions.
- **Micronutrient Deficiencies:** Critical deficiencies in Zinc are prominently observed in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, and Odisha, while levels of Iron and Boron exhibit high variability across the country, necessitating region-specific interventions.
- **Soil Health Card (SHC) Progress:** Since its inception in 2014-15, the Soil Health and Fertility Scheme has generated 25.89 crore cards, providing farmers with crop-wise recommendations for nutrients and fertilizers to improve productivity and soil quality.
- **Integrated Nutrient Management (INM):** The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) advocates for a balanced approach combining inorganic fertilizers with organic sources such as manure and bio-fertilizers to prevent soil degradation and improve fertility.



- **Institutional Capacity Building:** Over 7.17lakh demonstration programs have been conducted, supported by a network of 70,002 trained 'Krishi Sakhis' and the 'School Soil Health Programme' to inculcate soil conservation values in students and provide advisories.
- **Natural Farming Initiatives:** The National Mission on Natural Farming (NMNF) promotes livestock-integrated farming and biomass mulching to enhance soil organic content, improve soil structure, and increase water-holding capacity.

Key Definitions

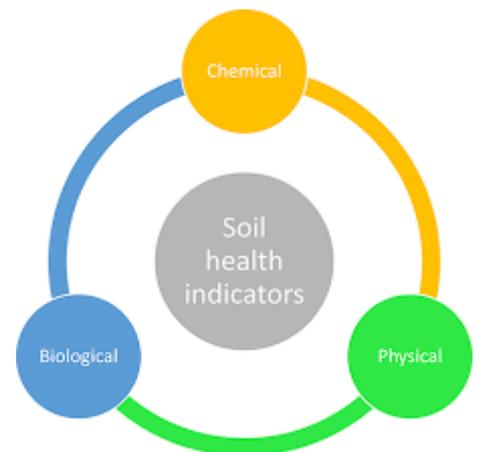
- **Soil Health Card (SHC):** A printed report given to farmers containing the status of their soil with respect to 12 parameters (Macro-nutrients, Secondary-nutrient, Micro-nutrients, and Physical parameters).
- **Integrated Nutrient Management (INM):** The maintenance of soil fertility and plant nutrient supply to an optimum level for sustaining the desired crop productivity through optimization of the benefits from all possible sources of organic, inorganic, and biological components.
- **Bio-fertilizers:** Substances which contain living microorganisms which, when applied to seeds, plant surfaces, or soil, colonize the rhizosphere or the interior of the plant and promote growth by increasing the supply or availability of primary nutrients.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48:** Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) which mandates the State to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines.
- **Entry 14, State List (Schedule VII):** Agriculture, including agricultural education and research, protection against pests and prevention of plant diseases.
- **Environment Protection Act, 1986:** Provides a broad framework for the protection and improvement of the environment, which includes soil as a vital natural resource subject to pollution and degradation laws.
- **Fertiliser Control Order (FCO), 1985:** Regulates the quality, distribution, and price of fertilizers in India, ensuring that only soil-appropriate inputs are marketed to farmers.

Additional Key Points for Examination

- **The NPK Ratio:** The ideal N:P:K ratio for Indian soils is generally considered 4:2:1; however, current consumption patterns are often skewed toward Nitrogen (Urea), leading to soil acidification and nutrient imbalance.
- **Natural Farming vs. Organic Farming:** While both avoid synthetic chemicals, Natural Farming (under NMNF) emphasizes on-farm inputs like Jivamrit and Bijamrit and livestock integration, whereas Organic Farming may rely on off-farm organic certified inputs.
- **Digital Extension:** Platforms like ATMA (Agricultural Technology Management Agency) and KVKs (Krishi Vigyan Kendras) serve as the bridge between scientific soil research and actual field application.





Conclusion

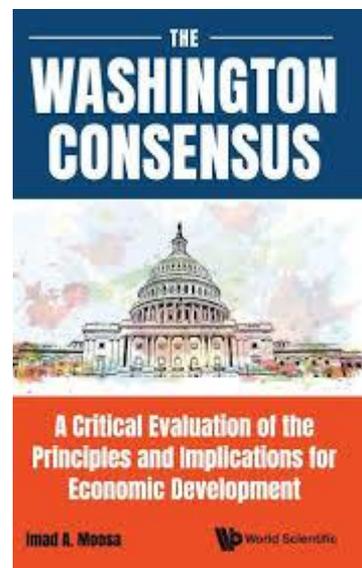
The status of soil health in India reflects a complex mosaic of nutrient sufficiency and localized deficiencies. The government's shift from high-input chemical farming toward Integrated Nutrient Management and Natural Farming underscores an urgent need to restore soil biology. By leveraging Digital Public Infrastructure and grassroots workers like Krishi Sakhis, the strategy aims to make soil health a community-led movement, ensuring long-term food security and climate resilience for Indian agriculture.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies; Public Distribution System; Technology missions; Economics of animal-rearing; Land reforms in India; Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.
- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population; Issues relating to the management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health and Education.
- **Prelims Link:** Parameters of the Soil Health Card; Difference between Macro and Micronutrients; Agencies involved (ICAR, DAC&FW); Objectives of the National Mission on Natural Farming.

6. The Decline of the Washington Consensus and the Rise of Pragmatic Eclecticism

- **The Ten Commandments of WC:** Coined by John Williamson in 1989, the Washington Consensus (WC) comprised ten neoliberal prescriptions—including fiscal discipline, tax reform, trade liberalization, privatization, and deregulation—designed as a universal "physician's prescription" for developing nations in crisis.
- **Ideological Origins and Implementation:** Rooted in the "Reaganomics" and "Thatcherism" of the 1980s, these reforms were enforced by Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and World Bank) through strict conditionalities, often ignoring the specific institutional weaknesses of developing economies.
- **Systemic Failures and Backlash:** The 1997 Asian Financial Crisis and the 2008 global meltdown exposed the flaws of the WC dogma; its rejection of industrial strategy and "trickle-down" assumptions led to rising inequality, social backlash, and the eventual failure of WTO rounds like Doha.
- **The Myth of Success:** Historical analysis reveals that successfully industrialized nations—including the US, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan—did not follow WC rules during their growth phases, instead utilizing state-led industrial policies and "infant industry" protections.
- **Emerging Alternatives:** The 21st century has seen the rise of a "Post-Washington Consensus" focusing on social safety nets and public accountability, alongside the "Beijing Narrative" of state-led intervention, marking the end of the "one-size-fits-all" market template.
- **Shift to Economic Nationalism:** In the mid-2020s, the world has moved toward "Pragmatic Eclecticism," where trade is balanced with national security, supply chains are reconfigured for dominance rather than efficiency, and sovereign power is used as a geopolitical instrument.





Key Definitions

- **Washington Consensus:** A set of 10 economic policy prescriptions considered the "standard" reform package promoted for crisis-wracked developing countries by Washington, D.C.-based institutions.
- **Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs):** Economic policies, including loans from the IMF and World Bank, which require countries to implement certain internal changes (like cutting social spending) to receive financial assistance.
- **Infant Industry Argument:** An economic rationale for protectionism which states that emerging domestic industries need protection from international competition until they become mature and competitive.
- **Pragmatic Eclecticism:** A policy approach that avoids rigid ideology and instead selects various instruments (subsidies, tariffs, public investment) based on specific national capacity and geopolitical context.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 39(b) & (c):** Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) in India that mandate the State to ensure the ownership and control of material resources are distributed to subserve the common good and prevent the concentration of wealth.
- **TRIPS Agreement (WTO):** International legal agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights, often criticized under the WC critique for limiting the policy space of developing nations to access technology and medicines.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** Indian legislation governing external trade and payments, reflecting India's shift from "control" to "management" of the economy during the post-1991 liberalization phase.
- **FRBM Act, 2003:** The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, which institutionalizes "Fiscal Discipline"—one of the core tenets of the WC—within the Indian legal framework.

Additional Key Points for Examination

- **LPG Reforms (1991):** India's Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization were influenced by the WC framework during a Balance of Payments crisis, but India maintained a "Middle Path" with calibrated capital account convertibility.
- **Global Financial Crisis (2008):** Acts as the definitive turning point where even Western nations returned to Keynesian state intervention (bank bailouts), effectively discrediting pure deregulation.
- **The Trump Tariff Tempest:** Represents the "theatrical undoing" of liberal trade, where protectionism is used as an instrument of national security rather than just economic policy.

Conclusion

The era of the Washington Consensus as a universal talisman has ended, replaced by a "messy landscape" where economic policy is inseparable from geopolitics. For developing nations, the challenge is no longer about blindly following a Western template but about designing context-sensitive policies that balance market efficiency with social equity and national security. The focus has shifted from "liberalize" to "what protects our strategic interest," demanding a new consensus that accounts for a digital, multipolar, and ecologically fragile world.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment; Effects of liberalization on the economy; Industrial policy.
- **Prelims Link:** Bretton Woods Institutions; WTO Agreements (TRIPS, TRIMs); Meaning of Capital Account vs. Current Account Convertibility; Definitions of neoliberal economic terms.

7. India-Canada Relations: A Strategic Turnaround and Economic Deliverables

- **Diplomatic Realignment:** The visit of Canadian PM Mark Carney (Feb 27–March 2, 2026) marks a significant "pragmatic turnaround" in bilateral ties, moving past the diplomatic friction of the previous administration toward a focus on high-value deliverables.
- **CEPA Roadmap:** A major highlight was the signing of the terms of agreement for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), establishing a structured roadmap for future trade negotiations and market access.
- **Energy Security & Nuclear Cooperation:** India's Department of Atomic Energy secured a long-term commercial contract with Canada's Cameco for uranium ore concentrates, essential for India's goal of achieving 100GW nuclear capacity by 2047.
- **Critical Minerals & Pax Silica:** An MoU on critical minerals aligns India and Canada with the U.S.-led "Pax Silica" coalition, aiming to diversify supply chains away from Chinese dominance in sectors vital for AI and semiconductors.
- **Trilateral Tech Innovation:** The Australia-Canada-India Technology and Innovation Partnership was strengthened to bolster long-term cooperation in research, cultural exchange, and food nutrition across the Indo-Pacific.
- **Geopolitical Convergence:** Amidst global "tariff wars" and supply chain disruptions, both nations expressed a shared interest in trade diversification and "strategic decoupling" from volatile regions to ensure economic momentum.



Key Definitions

- **CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement):** A broad-based trade agreement that covers negotiation on trade in services and investment, and other areas of economic partnership beyond just goods/tariffs.
- **Critical Minerals:** Metallic or non-metallic elements (like Lithium, Cobalt, RARE earths) that are essential for modern technology and national security, but have supply chains vulnerable to disruption.
- **Pax Silica:** A strategic framework or coalition (often involving the US and allies) focused on securing the semiconductor supply chain and maintaining dominance in silicon-based technologies.
- **Uranium Ore Concentrates:** Also known as "yellowcake," it is the intermediate step in the processing of uranium used as fuel in nuclear reactors.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that promotes international peace and security and encourages the settlement of international disputes by arbitration.
- **Article 253:** Empowers Parliament to make any law for the whole or any part of the territory of India for implementing any treaty, agreement, or convention with any other country.
- **SHANTI Bill, 2025 (Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India):** A domestic legislative framework designed to accelerate the deployment of nuclear reactors and streamline the procurement of nuclear fuel.
- **Atomic Energy Act, 1962:** The primary legal framework for the development, control, and use of atomic energy for the welfare of the people of India and for other peaceful purposes.

Additional Key Points for Examination

- **The "Carney Effect":** Unlike the "no-nonsense" or ideological style of the past, the current Canadian leadership is prioritizing "economic pragmatism" to insulate its trade from U.S. tariff pressures and European instability.
- **Indo-Pacific Strategy:** Canada's pivot toward India is a core component of its broader Indo-Pacific Strategy, recognizing India as a vital democratic anchor in the region.
- **Energy Transition:** The uranium deal is crucial for India's Net Zero targets, as nuclear energy provides the "base load" power necessary to supplement intermittent renewable sources like solar and wind.

Conclusion

The 2026 India-Canada summit represents the transition of a relationship from "legacy issues" to "future-ready sectors." By securing long-term fuel supplies for nuclear energy and collaborating on critical minerals, India is effectively hedging against global geopolitical volatility. This "deliverable-oriented" diplomacy ensures that even as global supply chains fragment, India retains access to the resources necessary for its high-tech industrialization and sustainable energy goals.

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/developing countries (U.S. tariffs, Pax Silica).
- **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure: Energy (Nuclear); Science and Technology- developments and their applications (Semiconductors, AI); Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation (Net Zero targets).
- **Prelims Link:** Locations (Kananaskis, Johannesburg); Details of the SHANTI Bill 2025; Major uranium producing countries; Members of Pax Silica coalition.

8. Constitutional Crisis: Notice for Removal of Chief Election Commissioner

- **Unprecedented Legislative Move:** For the first time in Indian parliamentary history, 193 MPs from the INDIA bloc have submitted a formal notice in both Houses of Parliament seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar.
- **Grounds of Impeachment:** The 10-page notice lists seven specific charges, including "partisan and discriminatory conduct," "deliberate obstruction of investigations into electoral fraud," and



allegations of "mass disenfranchisement" during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls.

- **Numerical Threshold Met:** The opposition has secured 130 signatures in the Lok Sabha (requirement: 100) and 63 in the Rajya Sabha (requirement: 50), comfortably meeting the statutory requirements under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968.
- **Allegations regarding SIR:** Opposition parties allege that the Special Intensive Revision of voter lists in states like West Bengal and Bihar was manipulated to benefit the ruling party, leading to a breakdown of trust between the Commission and the Opposition.
- **Procedural Complexity:** Since the notice was submitted in both Houses simultaneously, an inquiry committee can only be formed if the motion is admitted by both the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
- **Institutional Integrity:** The move highlights a deepening rift in the Indian democratic setup, where the neutrality of the Election Commission—a "bulwark of democracy"—is being formally challenged through constitutional mechanisms.

Key Definitions

- **Chief Election Commissioner (CEC):** The administrative head of the Election Commission of India, a body constitutionally empowered to conduct free and fair elections to the Parliament and State Legislatures.
- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR):** A rigorous process of updating electoral rolls, including adding new voters and deleting duplicates or deceased entries, usually conducted before major elections.
- **Motion of Removal:** A formal proposal moved in Parliament to remove a high constitutional functionary on grounds of "proved misbehaviour or incapacity."

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 324(5):** Stipulates that the CEC cannot be removed from office except in the "like manner and on like grounds" as a Judge of the Supreme Court. This provides the CEC with a security of tenure higher than that of the other Election Commissioners.
- **Article 124(4):** Outlines the removal process for a Supreme Court Judge, which requires an order of the President passed after an address by each House of Parliament supported by a majority of the total membership and a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting.
- **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968:** Regulates the procedure for the investigation and proof of the misbehaviour or incapacity of a judge. It mandates the creation of a three-member committee (comprising a SC judge, a Chief Justice of a High Court, and a distinguished jurist) to investigate the charges once a motion is admitted.
- **The CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023:** The latest legal framework governing the appointment process of the commission, which has recently been a point of contention regarding executive influence.





Additional Key Points for Examination

- **Security of Tenure:** While the CEC enjoys protection under Article 324(5), other Election Commissioners (ECs) do not have the same constitutional safeguard; they can be removed on the recommendation of the CEC.
- **Role of the Speaker/Chairman:** The presiding officers have the discretionary power to admit or refuse the motion. If admitted, they must jointly constitute an inquiry committee.
- **Historical Context:** While motions for the removal of High Court and Supreme Court judges have been initiated in the past (e.g., Justice V. Ramaswami, Justice Soumitra Sen), this is the first instance involving the head of the Election Commission.

Conclusion

The submission of a removal notice against the CEC signifies a critical juncture for India's electoral democracy. While the threshold for actual removal is extremely high—requiring a "special majority" that the opposition currently lacks—the move serves as a powerful "political check" on the executive. It underscores the necessity for the Election Commission to not only be independent but also be perceived as independent to maintain the sanctity of the "First Past the Post" system.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies; Parliament and State Legislatures—structure, functioning, conduct of business, and issues arising out of these.
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Integrity and impartiality of civil servants and constitutional heads; Ethical issues in governance and elections.
- **Prelims Link:** Article 324, Article 124(4), Judges (Inquiry) Act 1968, difference between the removal of CEC and ECs, and the numerical requirements for moving a removal motion in Lok Sabha vs. Rajya Sabha.

9. Parliamentary Panel Proposal for High-Level Committee on Urban Infrastructure

- **Need for Integrated Strategy:** The Standing Committee on Housing and Urban Affairs has recommended the formation of a High-Level Expert Committee to create a long-term urban investment and strategy framework tailored for the vision of "Viksit Bharat 2047."
- **Gap in Projections:** The panel highlighted that the last comprehensive assessment was by the High Powered Expert Committee (HPEC) in 2011, which only provided projections until 2031; currently, no national-level evaluation exists for demands beyond 2030.
- **Critique of Scheme-Driven Models:** While acknowledging flagship missions like AMRUT 2.0, SBM-U 2.0, and PMAY-U 2.0, the committee noted these remain "sector-specific" and "scheme-driven," lacking a holistic integration necessary for future urban resilience.
- **Governance and Capacity Building:** The proposed committee is expected to assess not just financing needs, but also critical governance reforms and capacity-building imperatives to prevent fragmented planning and resource misallocation.
- **Urbanization-Growth Linkage:** Referencing NITI Aayog's "Cities as Engines of Growth" report, the panel emphasized that planned urbanization is directly correlated with GDP growth, as nearly 75% of Indians are expected to reside in cities by 2030.



- **Financing Stress Mitigation:** An integrated framework is deemed essential to alleviate future financing stress and ensure that the rapid transition from rural to urban does not lead to infrastructure collapse.

Key Definitions

- **AMRUT 2.0:** Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation; focused on providing 100% coverage of water supply to all households in all statutory towns.
- **PMAY-U 2.0:** Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana - Urban; a central mission aimed at providing "Housing for All" in urban areas through interest subsidies and credit-linked support.
- **Viksit Bharat 2047:** The roadmap for India to become a developed nation by the 100th year of its independence, centered on structural and economic transformation.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992:** It mandated the setting up of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and District Planning Committees (DPCs) to ensure democratic decentralization and integrated planning (Article 243W and 243ZD).
- **Twelfth Schedule:** Contains 18 functional items that fall under the purview of Municipalities, including "Urban planning including town planning" and "Regulation of land-use."
- **Article 280:** The Finance Commission plays a pivotal role in recommending the distribution of financial resources between the Union and States, including grants-in-aid for local bodies to strengthen urban infrastructure.
- **Model Municipal Law:** A legal framework developed by the Ministry of Urban Development to guide states in reforming municipal laws to facilitate better infrastructure and financial management.

Additional Key Points for Examination

- **HPEC (2011) Legacy:** The High Powered Expert Committee headed by Isher Judge Ahluwalia provided the blueprint for current urban missions; the new proposal seeks to modernize this for the post-2030 era.
- **Urban Financing Gap:** According to World Bank estimates, India needs to invest approximately \$840 billion over the next 15 years in urban infrastructure to meet the demands of its growing population.
- **Smart Cities Mission (SCM):** While the panel focused on the HPEC, the SCM's role in creating "Integrated Command and Control Centers" is a precursor to the data-driven governance the panel now advocates for on a national scale.

Conclusion

The Parliamentary Standing Committee's report serves as a timely reminder that "project-based" urban development must evolve into "strategic-vision" planning. As India undergoes a massive demographic shift toward cities, the absence of an updated long-term framework could lead to unsustainable urban sprawl and economic inefficiency. A new High-Level Committee is necessary to bridge the data gap and align urban governance with the trillion-dollar aspirations of a 21st-century economy.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies (Parliamentary Committees); Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
- **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.; Economic development and the role of urbanization as a driver of growth.
- **Prelims Link:** 74th Amendment Act features; List of items in the 12th Schedule; Components of AMRUT and SBM-U; Key findings of the Ahluwalia HPEC 2011.

10. India and the 'Group for Equity' at Pandemic Agreement Negotiations

- **Advocating for Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS):** India has aligned with the "Group for Equity," a coalition of developing nations, to demand that the sharing of pathogen materials and genetic sequence data be met with fair, concrete, and legally enforceable benefits.
- **The Pandemic Agreement Framework:** Adopted by the World Health Assembly on May 20, 2025, this agreement serves as a legally binding international instrument designed to address the systemic inequalities exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Standard Legally Binding Contracts:** Developing countries insist that every entity accessing Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) materials must sign contracts that mandate specific benefit-sharing obligations at every stage of research and commercialization.
- **Monetary and Non-Monetary Benefits:** Proposed benefits include a percentage of annual revenue from commercialized products being paid back into the system, alongside the reservation of at least 10% of real-time pandemic product production for donation to the WHO.
- **Technological and Intellectual Equity:** The "Group for Equity" is pushing for manufacturers to grant non-exclusive licenses to developing country firms during health emergencies and provide products at affordable or not-for-profit prices.
- **Traceability of Biological Data:** A key demand is the ability to trace physical materials and digital sequence information (DSI) back to the originating country to ensure data sovereignty and appropriate compensation.

Key Definitions

- **Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) System:** A specialized framework under the Pandemic Agreement that regulates how countries share samples of viruses/bacteria and how they receive vaccines, diagnostics, or royalties in return.
- **Genetic Sequence Data (GSD):** The digital representation of the DNA or RNA of a pathogen, which allows scientists to study and develop vaccines without needing a physical sample of the virus.
- **Group for Equity:** A negotiating bloc of developing countries focused on ensuring that the "Global South" is not merely a provider of data but an equal partner in pharmaceutical outcomes.





Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51(c):** Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that mandates India to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one another.
- **Article 253:** Grants the Indian Parliament the power to make laws for the entire country to implement any international treaty, agreement, or convention, such as the WHO Pandemic Agreement.
- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002:** India's domestic law that already implements "Access and Benefit Sharing" (ABS) for biological resources; the current international talks aim to extend similar principles to human pathogens.
- **The Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897:** The primary Indian legislation for controlling the spread of dangerous epidemic diseases, which would be influenced by the international "rule book" being negotiated.

Additional Key Points for Examination

- **Digital Sequence Information (DSI) Controversy:** Developed nations often argue that DSI should be open-access to speed up research, while developing nations fear that without regulation, "digital biopiracy" will occur, where vaccines are made using their data without any return benefits.
- **Sovereignty over Pathogens:** Under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Nagoya Protocol, countries have sovereign rights over their biological resources; India is arguing that this must apply to pathogens that cause pandemics.
- **IGWG Mandate:** The Intergovernmental Working Group is tasked with the technical "rule book" that will determine the actual percentage of royalties and the specifics of technology transfer.

Conclusion

India's stance at the Geneva talks reflects its broader "Pharmacy of the World" strategy—balancing the need for rapid global scientific collaboration with the protection of the interests of the Global South. By rooting for a legally enforceable PABS system, India seeks to ensure that future pandemic responses are not characterized by the "vaccine apartheid" seen in the early 2020s. The success of these negotiations will determine whether the next pandemic is met with a unified global front or a fragmented system of bilateral deals.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its neighborhood- relations; Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Important International institutions (WHO), agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.
- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology- developments and their applications; Issues relating to intellectual property rights; Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-technology, Bio-technology.
- **Prelims Link:** Nagoya Protocol vs. Pandemic Agreement; Pathogen Access and Benefit-Sharing (PABS) terms; World Health Assembly (WHA) functions; Difference between physical samples and Genetic Sequence Data (GSD).



11. Geopolitical Volatility in the Strait of Hormuz: Impact on Indian Maritime Assets

- **Breakthrough Movement:** The 'Shivalik', an Indian-flagged LPG carrier owned by the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI), successfully crossed the Strait of Hormuz on Friday night, marking a critical movement amidst a regional blockade.
- **Strategic Cargo Volume:** The Shivalik carries over 54,000 tonnes of LPG, a volume equivalent to nearly one full day of India's total LPG imports, highlighting the vessel's importance to national energy security.
- **Stranded Assets:** Despite the Shivalik's transit, 23 Indian-flagged ships remain stranded west of the Strait (inside the Persian Gulf) due to the conflict initiated on February 28 and the closure threats by the Iranian leadership.
- **Navigational Hazards:** Ships are increasingly resorting to "digital darkness" (switching off Automatic Identification Systems - AIS) and manual navigation to bypass GPS spoofing and jamming, which are being deployed as electronic warfare tools in the region.
- **Energy Security Vulnerability:** India's high dependence on the Persian Gulf for energy is underscored by the presence of 23,000 Indian nationals working on merchant ships and offshore vessels in the region, with four sailors already killed in recent attacks.
- **Diplomatic Efforts:** Following discussions between the Indian Prime Minister and the Iranian President, industry leaders are seeking government advisories, though the Ministry of External Affairs maintains a cautious stance regarding the reopening of the Strait.

Key Definitions

- **Strait of Hormuz:** A narrow, strategically vital waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman; it is the world's most important oil chokepoint through which approximately one-fifth of global oil consumption passes.
- **Automatic Identification System (AIS):** An automated tracking system used on ships for identifying and locating vessels by electronically exchanging data with other nearby ships and coastal stations.
- **Digital Darkness/Dark Transit:** The practice of a vessel turning off its AIS transponder to avoid detection by hostile actors, though this also increases the risk of collisions at sea.
- **GPS Spoofing:** A form of electronic warfare where false satellite signals are sent to a receiver to provide incorrect location data, potentially leading a ship off course into hostile waters.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **UNCLOS, 1982:** The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides the legal framework for "Transit Passage" through straits used for international navigation, which states cannot legally suspend even during regional tensions.
- **Article 51:** Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that promotes international peace and security and the maintenance of just and honourable relations between nations.
- **Merchant Shipping Act, 1958:** The primary Indian legislation that governs the registration of Indian ships and ensures the safety and welfare of seafarers under the Indian flag.



- **Directorate General of Shipping (DGS):** The statutory body under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways responsible for maritime administration and the safety of Indian ships globally.

Additional Key Points for Examination

- **Chokepoint Geopolitics:** The "Shadow Fleet" (unregulated vessels) continues to operate in the region, while mainstream fleets face insurance hikes and physical threats, impacting global supply chain inflation.
- **Energy Diversification:** The crisis reinforces the need for India to accelerate its "Integrated Energy Policy," reducing reliance on the Persian Gulf by exploring the Northern Sea Route and African energy markets.
- **Indian Navy's Role:** While the Navy denied escorting the Shivalik, 'Operation Sankalp' remains the standing naval mission to ensure the safety of Indian merchant vessels in the Gulf region.

Conclusion

The successful transit of the Shivalik, while a positive tactical sign, does not mitigate the broader strategic risk posed by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. India's energy security remains precariously balanced on a "maritime tightrope," where electronic warfare and geopolitical maneuvers threaten the steady flow of LPG and crude oil. The situation necessitates a multi-pronged approach involving high-level diplomacy with Iran, enhanced naval presence, and the adoption of resilient navigational technologies by the merchant navy.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its neighborhood- relations; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Indian Diaspora (23,000 seafarers).
- **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Shipping; Security challenges and their management in border areas; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.
- **Prelims Link:** Map-based locations (Strait of Hormuz, Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, Ras Laffan); Difference between Territorial Waters and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ); Functions of the Shipping Corporation of India.

12. Iran's Diplomatic Outreach to BRICS: Security and Multilateralism

- **Request for Intervention:** Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi has urged India, as the current BRICS Chair, to leverage the grouping's influence to support "global stability and security" amid the ongoing conflict in West Asia.
- **BRICS as a Security Forum:** Tehran has explicitly called for BRICS to play a "constructive role" and condemn military aggression against Iran, signaling an attempt to transform the bloc from an economic collective into a geopolitical arbiter.
- **India's Strategic Balancing:** The outreach presents a diplomatic challenge for New Delhi, which has maintained a neutral stance by not criticizing U.S.-Israel strikes while simultaneously negotiating with Iran for the safe passage of Indian vessels through the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Summit Dynamics:** The upcoming BRICS Summit in India will be the first major gathering since the war began, featuring new members like Iran and the UAE, which may shift the bloc's traditional focus toward regional security crises.



- **High-Level Engagement:** This conversation marks the fourth ministerial interaction since February 28, following a direct call between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Masoud Pezeshkian regarding maritime safety.
- **Absence of Consensus:** Despite the escalating crisis, BRICS has yet to issue a collective statement, highlighting the internal complexities of a group that includes diverse strategic interests ranging from Russia and China to India and Brazil.



Key Definitions

- **BRICS:** A multilateral grouping originally consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, recently expanded (BRICS+) to include Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia, and the UAE, aimed at promoting South-South cooperation.
- **Multilateralism:** The process of organizing relations between three or more states based on shared principles and institutional frameworks, often as a counter-balance to unilateralism.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** A foundational principle of Indian foreign policy that allows the country to make decisions based on its national interest without being coerced by other states or alliances.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that mandates the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honourable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law.
- **Article 73:** Specifies that the executive power of the Union extends to matters with respect to which Parliament has power to make laws, which includes the signing and implementation of international treaties and participation in global forums like BRICS.
- **UN Charter, Chapter VIII:** Recognizes the role of regional arrangements in maintaining international peace and security, providing a broad legal context for blocs like BRICS to engage in security dialogues.

Additional Key Points for Examination

- **The "Hormuz Factor":** India's engagement is heavily driven by the necessity of the Strait of Hormuz for its energy security; any BRICS involvement must balance Tehran's security demands with global maritime stability.
- **Chairmanship Challenges:** As the Chair, India is responsible for drafting the "Leaders' Declaration." Reconciling Iran's demand for a condemnation of aggression with the varied stances of other members will test India's "Vishwa Mitra" (Global Friend) diplomacy.
- **Shifting Bloc Identity:** Originally an acronym for emerging economies, the push by Iran and Russia to include security mandates suggests a move toward making BRICS a "Global South" alternative to the G7.

Conclusion

Iran's call for BRICS to intervene in the West Asian crisis underscores the growing expectation for the grouping to act as a geopolitical heavyweight. For India, the situation requires a delicate diplomatic



act: fulfilling its responsibilities as the BRICS Chair while maintaining its strategic partnerships with Western powers. The outcome of the upcoming summit will likely define whether BRICS remains an economic cooperative or evolves into a significant security collective in a multipolar world.

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.
 - **International Relations:** Structure and mandate of BRICS; India-Iran bilateral relations; Energy security and maritime corridors (Strait of Hormuz).
 - **Prelims Link:** Current BRICS members (BRICS+); Headquarters of the New Development Bank (NDB); India's 2026 BRICS Chairmanship; Map-based locations of the Persian Gulf and Levant region.
-