



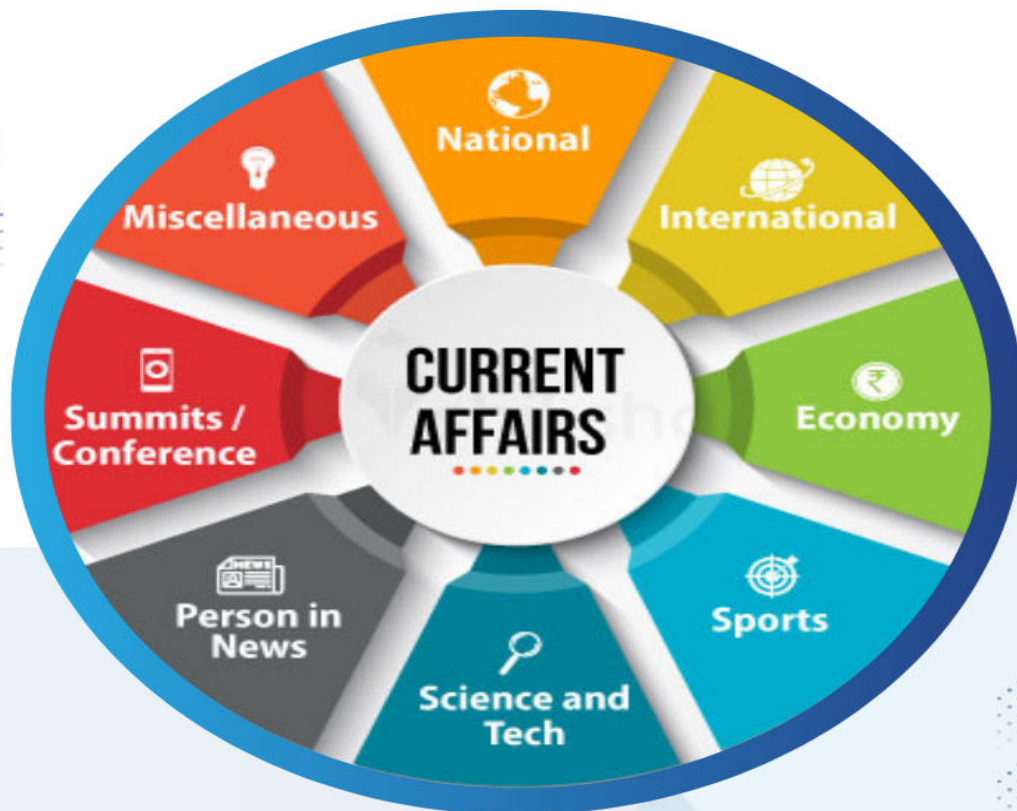
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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 30 / 03 / 2026 (MONDAY)



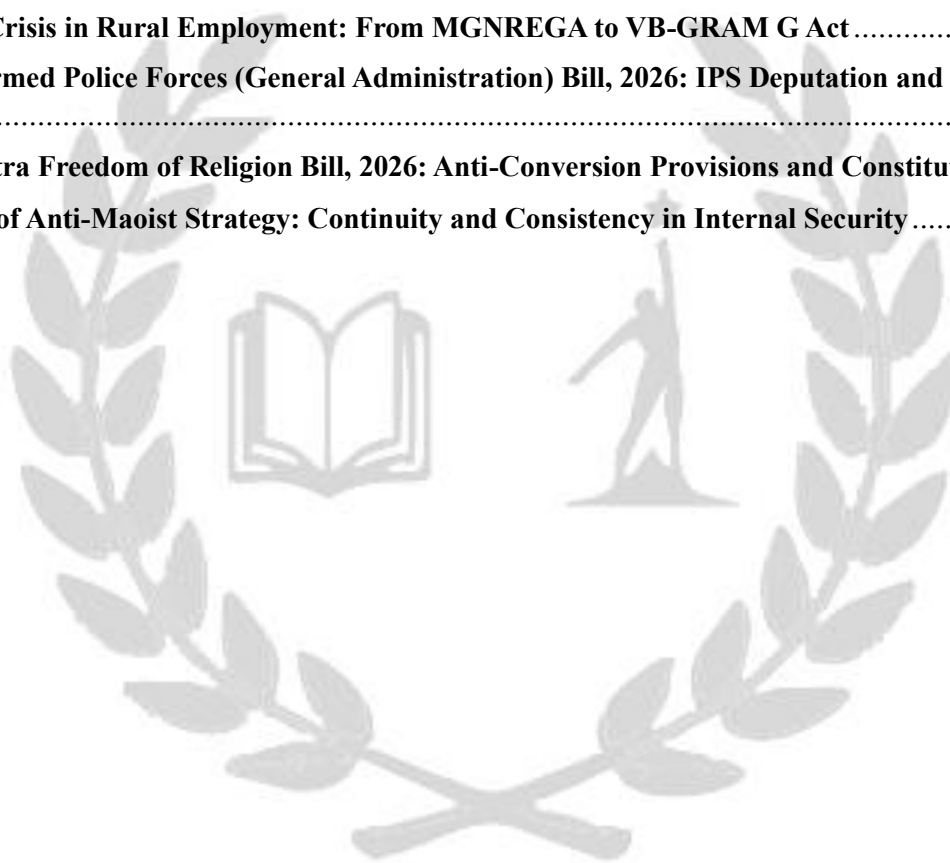
 **9972258970 & 9740702455**

**#317/A SKB Arcade, D. Subbaiah Road,
Ramaswamy Circle, Mysuru-570004**



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VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. Escalating West Asia Tensions and Pakistan's Diplomatic Mediation

The geopolitical landscape in West Asia has reached a critical juncture as Iran issues stern warnings against a potential U.S. ground invasion, while Pakistan emerges as a central mediator hosting a multi-nation diplomatic summit in Islamabad.

Key Summary Points for UPSC

- **Iran's Deterrence Posture:** Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf has warned of severe retaliation against any U.S. ground entry, labeling regional partners of the U.S. as potential targets.
- **Islamabad Diplomatic Hub:** Pakistan is facilitating high-level talks involving Foreign Ministers from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Turkiye to broker a ceasefire and stabilize the region.
- **Proposed U.S.-Iran Dialogue:** Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar announced that Islamabad will host upcoming talks between Washington and Tehran, signaling a rare opening for de-escalation.
- **Skepticism and Military Reality:** Despite diplomatic efforts, Iran views the regional meetings as a "cover" for further U.S. troop deployments, reflecting a deep trust deficit.
- **Ongoing Kinetic Conflict:** The diplomatic push coincides with active hostilities, including Israeli-U.S. strikes on Iranian interests and Tehran's retaliatory drone and missile operations.
- **Strategic Autonomy of Regional Players:** The involvement of Turkiye and Saudi Arabia underscores a shift toward regional solutions for Middle Eastern conflicts, independent of direct Israeli or U.S. participation in the initial stages.



Additional Important Keypoints

- **Non-Alignment vs. Mediation:** Pakistan's role highlights its attempt to balance its strategic ties with the U.S. while maintaining a functional relationship with its neighbor, Iran.
- **The "Ground Invasion" Threshold:** Iran's specific warning against ground troops suggests a "red line" that, if crossed, could transition the current proxy war into a full-scale regional conflagration.
- **Impact on Global Energy:** Prolonged instability in West Asia directly threatens the Strait of Hormuz, a critical chokepoint for India's energy security.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions (International Context)

- **Article 2(4) of the UN Charter:** Prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state; central to Iran's warning against invasion.
- **Article 51 of the UN Charter:** Relates to the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs, often cited by both Iran and the U.S. to justify military actions.
- **Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961):** Governs the conduct of the Foreign Ministers meeting in Islamabad and the protection of diplomatic channels during conflict.

Definition of Key Words

- **Ground Invasion:** A military offensive where armed forces enter and attempt to control the territory of another state using land-based troops.



- **De-escalation:** A reduction in the intensity or magnitude of a conflict through diplomatic negotiation or military withdrawal.
- **Shuttle Diplomacy:** Negotiations conducted by an intermediary (in this case, Pakistan) who travels between different locations to facilitate communication between parties who do not meet directly.

Conclusion

The current situation in West Asia represents a volatile mix of "brinkmanship" and "diplomacy." While the Islamabad meet offers a glimmer of hope for a negotiated settlement, the rhetoric from Tehran and the continued military exchanges suggest that the risk of miscalculation remains high. For a lasting peace, the underlying security concerns of both the U.S. and Iran must be addressed through the proposed Islamabad channel.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Indian Diaspora (West Asia is home to millions of Indians).
- **GS Paper III (Security):** Regional security implications and the impact of West Asian instability on India's maritime trade and energy corridors.
- **Strategic Importance:** This topic is vital for understanding "India's Look West Policy" and the challenges of maintaining neutrality in a polarized global order.

2. Telangana Employees Accountability and Monitoring of Parental Support Bill, 2026

The Telangana Legislative Assembly has passed a landmark legislation aimed at ensuring the welfare of elderly parents by making it legally mandatory for children in the workforce to provide financial support. This Bill marks a significant shift from moral obligation to statutory accountability for both public and private sector employees.

Key Summary Points

- **Mandatory Financial Support:** The Bill empowers the state to deduct a portion of an employee's salary if they are found to be neglecting or failing to support their dependent parents.
- **Universal Coverage:** Uniquely, the law extends beyond government and private sector employees to include MLAs, MPs, nominated members, and elected representatives of local bodies.
- **Deduction Cap:** The legislation stipulates a maximum salary deduction of 15% or Rs 10,000, whichever is lower, to be transferred directly to the parents' accounts.
- **Enforcement Mechanism:** The Bill shifts the burden of parental care from purely "goodwill" to a legal right, ensuring state intervention when familial neglect is reported.
- **Social Safety Net:** By targeting the working population, the Bill seeks to reduce the burden on state-run old-age homes and social security pensions by reinforcing the family unit.
- **Legislative Intent:** Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy emphasized that while parental care should ideally be voluntary, the law acts as a necessary shield for parents when voluntary support fails.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Complaint Redressal:** The Bill likely involves a designated authority or tribunal to adjudicate claims of neglect before any salary deduction is initiated.



- **Private Sector Inclusion:** Inclusion of the private sector makes this one of the most comprehensive parental support laws in India, moving beyond the scope of previous central legislations.
- **Gender Neutrality:** The provisions apply to all earning children, regardless of gender, reflecting modern legal standards of responsibility.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 41 of the Constitution:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) which directs the State to ensure the right to public assistance in cases of old age, sickness, and disablement.
- **Article 21:** The Right to Life with dignity, which the Judiciary has often interpreted to include the right of the elderly to live a life free from abandonment and hunger.
- **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007:** The central law that already provides a legal framework for maintenance; the Telangana Bill acts as a more stringent, executive-linked state-specific enhancement.
- **Entry 24, List III (Concurrent List):** Seventh Schedule, which deals with "Welfare of labour including conditions of work, provident funds, employers' liability, workmen's compensation, invalidity and old age pensions."

Definition of Key Words

- **Parental Support:** The provision of basic necessities including food, clothing, shelter, and medical attendance by children to their parents.
- **Nominated Members:** Individuals appointed to a legislative or local body by an executive authority (like the Governor or Government) rather than being elected by the public.
- **Salary Deduction:** A legal process where a portion of an individual's earnings is withheld by the employer at the source to fulfill a statutory obligation.

Conclusion

The Telangana Employees Accountability and Monitoring of Parental Support Bill, 2026, represents a proactive approach to the challenges posed by a changing demographic and the breakdown of traditional joint family systems. By linking professional earnings to filial duties, the state is attempting to institutionalize compassion. While critics may argue about the invasion of private family matters, the law provides a vital safety net for the vulnerable elderly who lack independent means of survival.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Social Justice):** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population; mechanisms, laws, institutions, and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Family values and the breakdown of traditional moral structures; the role of law in enforcing ethical conduct within society.
- **Essay Paper:** Topics related to the "Ageing Population in India," "Changing Family Dynamics," or "The Role of State in Personal Morality."



3. High-Risk Security Breaches: Systematic Theft of Explosives and Detonators in India

Recent Right to Information (RTI) data from the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) has highlighted a critical security vulnerability involving the large-scale theft of detonators and blasting caps from explosive "magazines," particularly in regions affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE).

Key Summary Points

- **Prevalence of Detonator Theft:** Detonators and blasting caps remain the most frequently stolen explosive items, with thousands of units reported missing across various high-security storage facilities.
- **Geographic Vulnerability:** Thefts are disproportionately concentrated in Naxal-affected districts, such as Janjgir-Champa in Chhattisgarh, suggesting a strategic procurement effort by insurgent groups.
- **Transition to Statutory Bans:** In response to escalating security threats, the Government of India issued a notification in October 2023 to phase out the manufacturing, possession, and import of electric detonators.
- **Implementation Timeline:** While the ban was announced in 2023, the transition period allowed for a full implementation deadline of April 2025 to mitigate immediate industrial disruptions.
- **PESO Oversight Concerns:** The RTI findings raise questions regarding the efficacy of the Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) in monitoring inventory at "magazines" (specialized explosive storehouses).
- **Dual-Use Dilemma:** The challenge lies in regulating these materials which are essential for legitimate mining and infrastructure projects but are easily diverted for improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Supply Chain Diversion:** Beyond audacious thefts, "leakage" from legitimate mining contracts into the black market remains a secondary channel for illegal explosive acquisition.
- **Security vs. Industry:** The ban on electric detonators forces the industry to shift toward non-electric or electronic initiation systems, which are technically more complex and harder to trigger illicitly.
- **LWE Strategy:** Historical patterns show that major insurgent strikes often follow significant thefts from industrial magazines, highlighting the predictive value of this data for intelligence agencies.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **The Explosives Act, 1884:** The primary legislation regulating the manufacture, possession, use, sale, transport, import, and export of explosives in India.
- **The Explosives Rules, 2008:** Derived from the 1884 Act, these rules provide the framework for licensing, storage (magazines), and safety protocols managed by PESO.
- **Article 246 (Seventh Schedule):** "Explosives" fall under the Union List (Entry 5), giving the Central Government exclusive power to legislate on the matter.



- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967:** Often invoked when stolen explosives are linked to terror activities or threats to the sovereignty and integrity of India.

Definition of Key Words

- **Detonator:** A small, sensitive explosive device used to trigger a larger, more stable main charge of secondary explosives.
- **Magazine:** A specially designed, high-security building or structure used for the storage of explosive materials.
- **PESO:** The Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation, a nodal agency under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, responsible for administering the Explosives Act and ensuring public safety.
- **Electric Detonator:** A detonator initiated by an electric current, typically more susceptible to accidental discharge or unauthorized use compared to modern electronic versions.

Conclusion

The persistent theft of detonators from regulated storehouses represents a significant gap in India's internal security architecture. While the 2023 ban on electric detonators is a proactive step toward "security by design," the transition period until 2025 leaves a window of vulnerability. Strengthening the real-time tracking of explosive inventories and enhancing the physical security of magazines in "Red Corridor" districts are essential to preventing the diversion of industrial materials into lethal insurgent weaponry.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Internal Security):** Linkages between organized crime and terrorism; challenges to internal security through communication networks and the role of media/social networking sites.
- **GS Paper III (Disaster Management):** Safety protocols and regulatory frameworks for hazardous materials.
- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Role of regulatory bodies like PESO and the effectiveness of the RTI Act in ensuring institutional accountability.

4. ASI Excavation at Balirajgarh: Unveiling the Ancient Videha Kingdom

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has initiated a large-scale scientific excavation at the historic Balirajgarh site in Bihar's Madhubani district. This excavation aims to explore the "cultural fabric" of an ancient settlement believed to be a major administrative and mythological hub of the Mithila region.

Key Summary Points

- **Historical Significance:** Balirajgarh is traditionally identified as the capital of the legendary King Bali and served as a vital administrative center for the ancient Videha Kingdom.
- **Chronological Depth:** Previous surveys established a continuous timeline of habitation spanning several eras, including the Mauryan (NBPW), Sunga, Kushan, Gupta, and Pala periods.
- **Pushing Back History:** Preliminary data suggests the site may predate the Mauryan era, potentially belonging to the Iron Age Videha Kingdom, which could push the region's documented history back by several centuries.
- **Massive Fortification:** The site features a significant brick fortification covering approximately 176 acres, indicating highly proficient urban planning and defensive capabilities in ancient times.



- **Modern Methodology:** The ASI is employing 20 trenches alongside modern tools like satellite imagery and systematic mapping to reach the "virgin soil" (original, undisturbed ground) to determine the exact start of human settlement.
- **Socio-Economic Impact:** The project includes plans for a modern museum modeled after the Patna Museum, aimed at transforming the local economy through tourism and preserving artefacts like punch-marked coins, terracotta figurines, and copper objects.



Additional Important Keypoints

- **Mithila Heritage:** The excavation is expected to solidify Madhubani's standing as a global center for Indian philosophy and cultural heritage.
- **Overcoming Technical Hurdles:** Modern mapping is being used specifically to bypass high water tables that had stalled previous excavation attempts at the 176-acre mound.
- **Evidence of Urbanization:** Prior finds of ancient beads, bone tools, and sophisticated toys suggest a thriving, economically active urban civilization.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 49 of the Constitution:** A Directive Principle (DPSP) that mandates the State to protect every monument or place of artistic or historic interest declared to be of national importance.
- **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958:** The primary legal framework under which Balirajgarh was declared a protected site by the ASI in 1938.
- **Seventh Schedule (Entry 67, Union List):** Grants the Central Government the power to legislate on ancient and historical monuments and records declared by law to be of national importance.
- **Entry 40, Concurrent List:** Archaeological sites and remains other than those declared by or under law made by Parliament to be of national importance.

Definition of Key Words

- **NBPW (Northern Black Polished Ware):** A high-quality, glossy pottery type characteristic of the urban Iron Age in the Indian subcontinent, primarily associated with the Mauryan period.
- **Virgin Soil:** In archaeology, this refers to the natural, undisturbed soil layer that contains no evidence of human activity or habitation.
- **Videha Kingdom:** An ancient Indian kingdom in late Vedic India which rose to prominence under King Janaka; it is central to the history of the Mithila region.
- **Punch-marked Coins:** The earliest type of Indian coinage, made of silver or copper, featuring various symbols punched onto the metal.

Conclusion

The scientific excavation at Balirajgarh is more than a local archaeological project; it is a vital effort to bridge the gap between Vedic literature and physical archaeological evidence. By potentially identifying Iron Age layers, the ASI may provide the empirical foundation for the legendary Videha Kingdom, thereby enriching the narrative of India's early urbanization and its philosophical roots in Mithila.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I (Art and Culture):** Significant for topics related to ancient Indian history, various dynasties (Mauryan to Pala), and the evolution of urban planning and architecture.
- **GS Paper I (Geography):** Impact of riverine systems and water tables on archaeological preservation and settlement patterns in the Indo-Gangetic plain.
- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Role of the ASI and the Ministry of Culture in heritage management and the implementation of the AMASR Act.
- **Prelims Focus:** Locations of ancient sites, associated pottery types (NBPW), and the chronological order of dynasties in North India.

5. PM-KUSUM 2.0: Integrating Battery Storage and Agrivoltaics for Rural Energy Security

The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) is preparing to launch PM-KUSUM 2.0, a revamped version of its flagship solar scheme. The new phase aims to address the mismatch between solar generation and agricultural power demand by introducing Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and a dedicated 10 GW agrivoltaics component.

Key Summary Points

- **Introduction of Battery Storage:** PM-KUSUM 2.0 proposes incorporating battery storage (BESS) to store surplus solar energy generated during the day for use during peak morning or evening irrigation hours, enhancing grid stability.
- **Agrivoltaics (Agri-PV) Component:** A dedicated 10 GW target has been set for agrivoltaics, where solar panels are installed at a height that allows farmers to cultivate crops underneath, ensuring dual land use.
- **Addressing Power Mismatch:** The shift to battery storage aims to bridge the gap between solar peak generation (noon) and agricultural load demand (early morning/late evening), reducing the operational burden on DISCOMs.
- **Transition of Roles:** The scheme envisions transforming farmers from "Annadata" (food providers) to "Urjadaata" (energy providers) by allowing them to sell surplus stored power back to the grid.
- **Enhanced Financial Safeguards:** The new phase is expected to introduce mandatory bank guarantees for EPC (Engineering, Procurement, and Construction) contractors to ensure long-term plant performance and protect farmers' investments.
- **Unified Digital Governance:** A national application portal will be launched to streamline the subsidy process and improve transparency between central and state implementing agencies.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Storage Capacity Debate:** Discussions are ongoing between the Ministry of Power (proposing 4-hour storage) and MNRE (proposing 2-hour storage) to determine the ideal battery capacity for farm pumps.
- **Integration with AIF:** Components B and C of the scheme are being linked with the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF) to provide farmers with easier access to low-interest loans.



- **Progress Milestone:** As of early 2026, over 10 lakh standalone solar pumps have been installed, and 13 lakh grid-connected pumps have been solarised, though capacity addition remains below the original 34.8 GW target.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment; the transition to solar energy directly fulfills this constitutional mandate by reducing carbon emissions.
- **Article 246 (Seventh Schedule):** Agriculture is a State List subject (Entry 14), while Electricity is in the Concurrent List (Entry 38), necessitating the cooperative federalism model used in PM-KUSUM's 30-30-40 funding split.
- **Energy Conservation Act, 2001:** Provides the regulatory framework for energy efficiency and the promotion of renewable energy sources in industrial and agricultural sectors.

Definition of Key Words

- **Agrivoltaics:** The simultaneous use of land for both solar energy production and agriculture, often using stilt-mounted panels to allow light and space for crops.
- **BESS (Battery Energy Storage System):** A technology that captures energy produced at one time for use at a later time, typically using lithium-ion or similar battery chemistries.
- **Feeder-Level Solarisation (FLS):** A model where an entire electricity feeder serving multiple agricultural pumps is solarised, rather than individual pumps, to achieve economies of scale.

Conclusion

PM-KUSUM 2.0 represents a strategic evolution from simple solar adoption to "smart" energy management in rural India. By integrating battery storage and agrivoltaics, the government is tackling the twin challenges of land scarcity and grid synchronization. If successfully implemented, this version could significantly de-dieselize the farm sector while providing a resilient, second source of income for the Indian farmer.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Economy & Energy):** Mobilization of resources, inclusive growth, and issues arising from it; Infrastructure: Energy (Renewable).
- **GS Paper III (Agriculture):** Technology in the aid of farmers; issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies.

6. Ethanol Blending in India: Strategic Shift, Economic Gains, and Food-Fuel Trade-offs

In the wake of crude oil volatility caused by the West Asia conflict, India's ethanol manufacturers are advocating for an increase in the blending ratio beyond the current 20% (E20) mandate. While the program has significantly reduced import bills, it raises critical questions regarding long-term agricultural sustainability and national food security.

• SOLAR SUPPLY MISMATCH

THE CURRENT scheme focuses on solarisation of agri pumps and does not include battery storage

BATTERY STORAGE is under consideration to address the challenge of mismatch between agri power demand and solar generation patterns

THE PROPOSED battery storage component will store surplus solar power generated during peak hours, and supply it when demand persists but generation falls



THE MINISTRY of Power has suggested provisioning for up to four hours of battery storage, while MNRE has proposed a two-hour capacity



Key Summary Points

- **Progress in Blending:** India has achieved a remarkable leap in ethanol blending, rising from 1.5% a decade ago to 20% in 2025. This transition currently replaces approximately 45 million barrels of imported crude oil annually.
- **Economic and Environmental Impact:** The Petroleum Ministry estimates savings of ₹1.44 trillion between 2014 and 2025, alongside a carbon dioxide emission reduction equivalent to planting 300 million trees.
- **Industry Push for E27 and Flex-Fuel:** With an installed capacity of 20 billion litres (nearly double the 11 billion required for E20), manufacturers are lobbying for a 27% blending ratio and the mandatory adoption of Flex-Fuel Vehicles (FFVs).
- **Agricultural Shift:** High procurement prices have led to a "crop shift," with area under maize, rice, and sugarcane increasing by 20%, 9%, and 13% respectively, while pulses and oilseeds cultivation has declined.
- **Sustainability Concerns:** The Economic Survey 2026 warns that incentivizing water-intensive crops for fuel could deplete water tables, increase the chemical fertilizer subsidy burden, and deepen India's dependence on imported edible oils.
- **The EV Alternative:** While ethanol addresses internal combustion engines, the slow adoption of Electric Vehicles (EVs)—currently at only 3% for passenger cars—remains a hurdle in achieving the 30% sales target by 2030.



Additional Important Keypoints

- **Vehicle Compatibility:** Older vehicles (pre-2021) face efficiency losses and potential hardware damage due to the corrosive nature of high-ethanol blends, a technical challenge for the existing fleet.
- **Revenue for Farmers:** The ethanol program currently generates an annual farm revenue of approximately ₹40,000 crore, providing a reliable income stream for sugarcane and grain farmers.
- **Energy Sovereignty:** Higher blending is viewed as a strategic tool to insulate the Indian economy from geopolitical shocks in the Middle East that drive up global Brent crude prices.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Mandates the State to protect and improve the environment; ethanol blending serves as a tool for reducing vehicular pollution.
- **Article 39(b):** Directs that the ownership and control of material resources are distributed to subserve the common good, justifying the diversion of food grains for energy security.
- **National Policy on Biofuels, 2018 (Amended 2022):** The primary regulatory framework that advanced the target for 20% ethanol blending from 2030 to the 2025-26 supply year.
- **Industries (Development and Regulation) Act, 1951:** Provides the legal basis for the central government to regulate the production and distribution of ethanol.



Definition of Key Words

- **Flex-Fuel Vehicles (FFVs):** Vehicles equipped with an internal combustion engine capable of running on any blend of gasoline and ethanol, up to 83% or even 100% (E100).
- **First-Generation (1G) Ethanol:** Biofuel produced directly from food crops like sugarcane juice, molasses, maize, and damaged food grains.
- **Agri-Inflation:** A rise in the price of agricultural commodities; a risk associated with diverting significant portions of food crops to fuel production.

Conclusion

The ethanol blending program is a double-edged sword for India. While it successfully addresses the immediate "energy trilemma" of security, equity, and sustainability, it inadvertently creates a "food vs. fuel" conflict. For a balanced trajectory, India must transition toward Second-Generation (2G) ethanol (made from agricultural waste) to ensure that energy independence does not come at the cost of nutritional security or ecological degradation.

UPSC Relevance

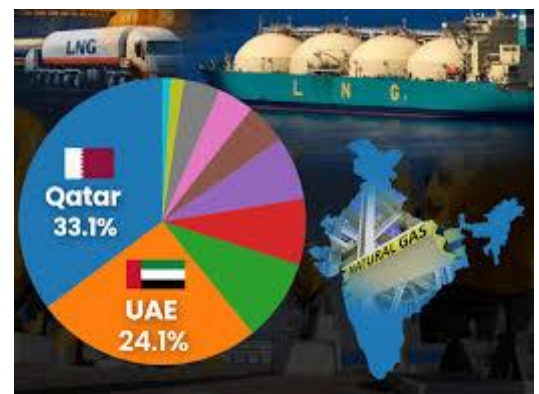
- **GS Paper III (Economy):** Mobilization of resources, energy security, and the impact of the import bill on the Current Account Deficit (CAD).
- **GS Paper III (Agriculture):** Changes in cropping patterns, issues related to buffer stocks, and the sustainability of water-intensive crops.
- **GS Paper III (Environment):** Climate change commitments (Nationally Determined Contributions) and the role of biofuels in decarbonizing the transport sector.
- **Prelims Focus:** E20 targets, National Policy on Biofuels, and the difference between 1G, 2G, and 3G ethanol.

7. India's Energy Diversification: Sourcing LPG and LNG from Angola

Amidst the escalating Iran war and the subsequent blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, India is strategically pivoting toward African energy markets. Four state-run oil majors—IOCL, BPCL, HPCL, and GAIL—are in preliminary government-to-government talks with Angola's Sonangol to secure long-term contracts for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to mitigate a severe domestic supply crunch.

Key Summary Points for UPSC

- **Strategic Pivot to Africa:** India is seeking to ink "term contracts" with Angola's national oil company, Sonangol, marking a significant shift from its traditional heavy reliance on West Asian suppliers like Qatar and the UAE.
- **Impact of Hormuz Blockade:** Approximately 90% of India's LPG imports have been disrupted due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, forcing the government to prioritize domestic supplies and restrict LPG booking intervals to 25 days in urban and 45 days in rural areas.





- **Logistical Advantage:** Sourcing from Central Africa (Angola) offers a logistical edge, with transit times being 10-15 days shorter than shipments from North America, providing a faster response to the domestic shortage.
- **Diversification of Energy Basket:** India currently imports nearly 60% of its LPG and 50% of its natural gas requirements; the Angola deal represents a move toward "energy sovereignty" by de-risking the supply chain from Middle Eastern geopolitical volatility.
- **Technical Synergy:** Angola's LNG projects produce essential components such as Ethane (C2), Propane (C3), and Butane (C4), which are critical feedstocks for LPG production, making it a highly compatible partner for India's energy needs.
- **State-Led Diplomacy:** The negotiations involve a "G2G" (Government-to-Government) framework, highlighting the role of energy diplomacy in India's foreign policy during global conflicts.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Supply Chain Resilience:** The current crisis underscores the vulnerability of "Just-in-Time" energy imports and the necessity for a more geographically distributed network of suppliers.
- **Role of Sonangol:** As a major stakeholder (22%) in the Chevron-operated Angola LNG project, Sonangol's cooperation is pivotal for India to secure stable, long-term volumes.
- **Energy-Security Linkage:** The "West Asia War" has transformed energy procurement from a commercial activity into a core national security priority for the Indian government.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Entry 53, Union List (Seventh Schedule):** Grants the Central Government exclusive power over "Regulation and development of oilfields and mineral oil resources; petroleum and petroleum products."
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Invoked during such shortages to regulate the delivery, distribution, and pricing of LPG to prevent hoarding and ensure equitable access.
- **Article 73 of the Constitution:** Extends the executive power of the Union to matters with respect to which Parliament has power to make laws, facilitating international energy treaties and G2G agreements.
- **National Policy on Biofuels & Integrated Energy Policy:** While focusing on renewables, these policies emphasize the "diversification of import sources" as a primary pillar of India's energy security strategy.

Definition of Key Words

- **Strait of Hormuz:** A narrow waterway between the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf; it is the world's most important oil chokepoint, through which 1/5th of global oil consumption passes.
- **LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas):** A flammable mixture of hydrocarbon gases, primarily propane and butane, used as fuel in heating appliances and vehicles.
- **Term Contracts:** Long-term agreements between a buyer and seller for the supply of a specific quantity of a commodity over a fixed period, often at a predetermined pricing formula.
- **C2, C3, C4:** Chemical shorthand for Ethane, Propane, and Butane; these are the building blocks of the petrochemical industry and the primary constituents of cooking gas.



Conclusion

India's move to eye Angolan gas is a pragmatic response to the "energy hostage" situation created by the Strait of Hormuz blockade. While West Asia will remain a primary partner due to geographical proximity and existing infrastructure, the "Angola Pivot" marks the beginning of a more resilient, multi-polar energy procurement strategy. Success in these talks will not only ease the current domestic cooking gas shortage but also set a precedent for deeper Indo-African strategic ties.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of politics of developed and developing countries on India's energy security.
- **GS Paper III (Economy & Energy):** Infrastructure: Energy; Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth; Mobilization of resources.

8. WTO Fisheries Subsidies: India's Stand for Equitable Global Rules

At the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference in Yaoundé, Cameroon, India strongly advocated for the protection of small-scale, traditional, and artisanal fishers against rigid global subsidy disciplines. Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal emphasized that global rules must distinguish between the "polluter" industrial fleets of developed nations and the "livelihood-based" fishing communities of developing countries.

Key Summary Points for UPSC

- **Livelihood vs. Industrial Fishing:** India highlighted that its fisheries sector supports over 9 million families through sustainable, traditional methods, unlike the heavily mechanized, distant-water industrial fleets of developed nations.
- **Subsidy Disparity:** India pointed out a massive global inequity; its annual subsidy is barely \$15 per fisher family, whereas developed nations provide tens of thousands of dollars, contributing significantly to global overfishing.
- **Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT):** India demanded a 25-year transition period for developing nations to adjust to new rules and a permanent "carve-out" (exemption) for small-scale fishers to ensure food and livelihood security.
- **Phase II Negotiations:** The discussions focused on shaping the "Phase II" disciplines of the WTO Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, specifically targeting subsidies that contribute to "overcapacity and overfishing."
- **Sustainability Stewardship:** India cited its long-standing conservation measures, such as mandatory annual fishing bans (monsoon bans), as evidence of its commitment to sustainability pre-dating global mandates.
- **The "Polluter Pays" Principle:** New Delhi maintained that the onus of discipline should lie on the heavily subsidized industrial fleets responsible for depleting global fish stocks, rather than subsistence fishers.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Per Capita Intensity:** India proposed that subsidy disciplines should be calculated based on "per capita intensity" (subsidy per person) rather than aggregate figures to reflect the true socio-economic context.



- **Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR):** India successfully bridged environmental conservation with equity by applying the CBDR principle—originally from climate negotiations—to the fisheries sector.
- **Food Security Linkage:** For India, fisheries are not just a trade issue but a critical component of national food security and rural employment.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21 of the Constitution:** The Right to Life includes the right to livelihood; the government's stand at the WTO is a defense of the constitutional right of 9 million fisher families.
- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife, which includes marine biodiversity.
- **Entry 21, State List (Seventh Schedule):** Fisheries is primarily a state subject, but the Union Government handles international treaties and trade (Entry 10 & 14, Union List).
- **The Territorial Waters, Continental Shelf, Exclusive Economic Zone and Other Maritime Zones Act, 1976:** Provides the legal framework for India's sovereign rights over its 200-nautical-mile EEZ.

Definition of Key Words

- **Artisanal Fishing:** Small-scale, low-technology, low-capital fishing practices undertaken by individual households using traditional boats.
- **Distant-Water Fishing:** Industrial-scale fishing conducted by vessels outside their own country's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), often in the high seas or other nations' waters.
- **Overcapacity:** When a fishing fleet has the technical capacity to catch more fish than can be sustainably harvested from a particular stock.
- **WTO Ministerial Conference (MC):** The highest decision-making body of the World Trade Organization, which usually meets every two years.

Conclusion

India's position at the WTO MC14 reflects a "human-centric" approach to global trade. By demanding a 25-year transition and a permanent carve-out for small fishers, India is challenging the "one-size-fits-all" regulatory model. The outcome of these negotiations will determine whether international trade law prioritizes the environmental "cleanup" of industrial excess or the protection of the world's most vulnerable subsistence communities.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Important International institutions (WTO), their structure, and mandate; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III (Economy):** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; WTO-related issues.



9. The Wage Crisis in Rural Employment: From MGNREGA to VB-GRAM G Act

The transition from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) to the Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act (VB-GRAM G) has sparked a critical debate regarding wage suppression. While the new Act introduces a 60:40 cost-sharing model between the Centre and States, it perpetuates a "real-wage freeze" that has decoupled employment guarantee wages from both state minimum wages and market realities.

Key Summary Points for UPSC

- **Evolution of Wage Determination:** Under MGNREGA Section 6, wages transitioned from being linked to State-specific minimum agricultural wages (Section 6(2)) to being centrally notified (Section 6(1)). This allowed the Centre to decouple MGNREGA rates from rising state minimum wages.
- **The Real-Wage Freeze:** Since 2009, MGNREGA wages have been indexed only to the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL). This has resulted in a stagnation of "real wages," causing them to lag significantly behind market rates and statutory minimum wages in most states.
- **The "Discouragement Effect":** The widening gap between market wages and guarantee wages, compounded by chronic payment delays and technical failures in the Aadhaar-based system, has led to a decline in genuine worker enthusiasm and participation.
- **VB-GRAM G Statutory Shift:** The new VB-GRAM G Act retains the Centre's power to set wages (Section 10) but omits the "non-obstante" clause that previously allowed MGNREGA to legally override the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, creating a potential legal vacuum.
- **Fiscal Federalism and Cost Sharing:** Unlike MGNREGA, where the Centre bore 100% of wage costs, VB-GRAM G adopts a 60:40 sharing ratio. Critics argue this should have logically led to a return to State-determined minimum wages, as States now have "skin in the game."
- **Governance and Leakages:** Discrepancies between official employment statistics and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data suggest that while "on-paper" employment remains high, actual field participation is declining, often replaced by administrative leakages and corruption.



Additional Important Key Points

- **Productivity vs. Wages:** The freeze in real wages ignores the rising cost of living and the increased productivity expectations in rural asset creation.
- **Legal Vulnerability:** Without the non-obstante clause in the new Act, paying workers less than the notified State minimum wage may be interpreted as "forced labour" under Article 23 of the Constitution.
- **Market Wage Tightening:** Historically, MGNREGA (2006-2014) acted as a "floor" for rural wages; the current stagnation risks depressing the entire rural labour market.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The Right to Life includes the right to live with human dignity, which encompasses receiving a "living wage" rather than just a subsistence wage.



- **Article 23:** Prohibits "begar" and other similar forms of forced labour. The Supreme Court has previously held that paying less than the minimum wage amounts to forced labour.
- **The Minimum Wages Act, 1948:** Provides for fixing minimum rates of wages in certain employments. The exclusion of the "notwithstanding" clause in VB-GRAM G makes this Act applicable to rural employment works.
- **Article 43 (DPSP):** Directs the State to secure a "living wage" and conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life for all workers.

Definition of Key Words

- **Real-Wage Freeze:** A situation where nominal wages increase only enough to keep up with inflation (CPI-AL), resulting in zero growth in actual purchasing power over time.
- **Non-obstante Clause:** A legal provision (usually starting with "Notwithstanding anything contained...") used to allow one law to override the provisions of another conflicting law.
- **CPI-AL (Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers):** A price index used specifically to adjust the wages of rural labourers to account for inflation in essential commodities.
- **Ajeevika Mission (Gramin):** The rural component of the national livelihood mission aimed at promoting self-employment and skilled wage employment.

Conclusion

The VB-GRAM G Act represents a missed opportunity to harmonize rural employment wages with the Minimum Wages Act. By retaining central control over wage rates while shifting 40% of the financial burden to States, the legislation creates a structural imbalance. For the mission to truly contribute to a "Viksit Bharat," the wage framework must move beyond a mere "poverty alleviation" mindset toward a "dignified labour" model that ensures timely, market-aligned payments.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.
- **GS Paper III (Economy):** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of food security.

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10. Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, 2026: IPS Deputation and Cadre Management

On March 25, 2026, the Union Government introduced the CAPF (General Administration) Bill in the Rajya Sabha. The legislation codifies the recruitment and service conditions for Group A General Duty Officers (GAGDO) across five major CAPFs, specifically reinforcing the role of Indian Police Service (IPS) officers in senior leadership positions through defined deputation quotas.

Key Summary Points for UPSC

- **Codification of Senior Leadership:** The Bill stipulates that 100% of Director General (DG) and Special DG posts, a minimum of 67% of Additional DG posts, and 50% of Inspector General (IG) posts must be filled by IPS officers on deputation.



- **Scope of Application:** The Act applies to the "Five Sisters" of the CAPFs: the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB).
- **Legislative Response to Judiciary:** The Bill is perceived as an institutional measure to address the May 2025 Supreme Court ruling in *Sanjay Prakash vs Union of India*, which had directed a progressive reduction in IPS deputation at the IG level and below.
- **Preserving Financial Benefits:** The legislation explicitly "saves" or protects the financial benefits previously granted to the GAGDO (officers of Assistant Commandant rank and above) under the Organized Group 'A' Service (OGAS) status.
- **Strategic Coordination:** The government maintains that IPS presence is vital for seamless coordination between the Union's armed forces and State police forces, as IPS officers hold the majority of senior operational posts in the States.
- **Camaraderie and Integration:** Recent modifications in MHA guidelines (January 2026) make a two-year central stint mandatory for IPS empanelment, aimed at fostering better integration between cadre officers and deputationists at the SP/DIG levels.



Additional Important Keypoints

- **Sardar Patel's Vision:** The Bill invokes the historical intent of the All India Services serving as a "unifying link" between the Union and the States, ensuring a uniform standard of administration and internal security.
- **Policy Domain vs. Judicial Review:** The government argues that the ratio of deputation is a policy matter falling under the executive's domain, citing that courts should not act as appellate authorities over policy wisdom unless it is arbitrary or irrational.
- **Cadre Review Mechanism:** While the Bill secures IPS quotas, it also emphasizes the necessity of regular intake and timely cadre reviews to address the career progression grievances of direct-entry CAPF officers.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 312:** Relates to the creation and regulation of All India Services (including the IPS), emphasizing their role in serving both the Union and the States.
- **Article 309:** Empowers the Parliament and State Legislatures to regulate the recruitment and conditions of service of persons appointed to public services and posts.
- **Entry 2, Union List (Seventh Schedule):** Grants the Centre exclusive power over the "Naval, military and air forces; any other armed forces of the Union."
- **Doctrine of Separation of Powers:** The Bill underscores the executive's prerogative in policy-making, asserting that judicial intervention in service rules should be limited to interpreting the law rather than creating policy.



Definition of Key Words

- **GAGDO (Group A General Duty Officers):** The dedicated cadre of the CAPFs (Assistant Commandants to IGs) who are directly recruited through the UPSC Central Armed Police Forces exam.
- **Deputation:** The temporary transfer of a government employee from their parent department (e.g., State Police/IPS) to another organization (e.g., BSF/CRPF) for a specific period.
- **OGAS (Organized Group 'A' Service):** A status that grants certain benefits like Non-Functional Selection Grade (NFSG) and assured career progression, which CAPF officers were granted following prolonged legal battles.
- **Non-obstante Clause:** A provision often found in such Bills to ensure that the new rules prevail over any previous contradictory court orders or existing service rules.

Conclusion

The CAPF (General Administration) Bill, 2026, seeks to end the long-standing "Cadre vs. IPS" friction by providing statutory clarity to the leadership structure of India's internal security forces. By codifying the IPS quota at the top tiers, the government prioritizes inter-agency coordination and the "All India" character of security management. However, the success of this legislation will depend on how effectively the government balances these quotas with the professional aspirations and morale of the dedicated CAPF cadre officers.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Role of civil services in a democracy; structure, organization, and functioning of the Executive; separation of powers between various organs.
- **GS Paper III (Internal Security):** Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate; challenges to internal security through coordination gaps.

11. Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026: Anti-Conversion Provisions and Constitutional Debate

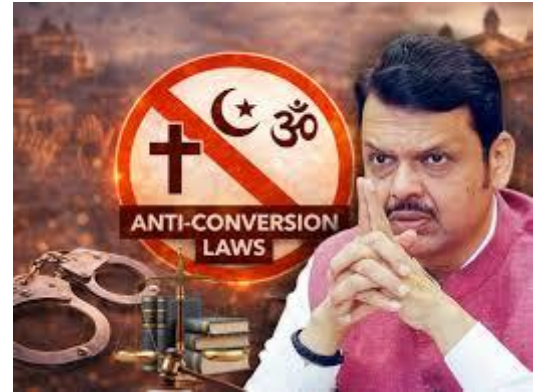
The Maharashtra Legislature recently passed the Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026, aimed at prohibiting unlawful religious conversions. While the government defends the legislation as a necessary measure to maintain public order and social harmony, civil society groups and legal experts have raised significant concerns regarding its impact on personal liberty and the right to privacy.

Key Summary Points

- **Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion:** The Bill explicitly bans conversions carried out through force, allurement, misrepresentation, undue influence, coercion, or any other fraudulent means.
- **Mandatory Disclosure Procedure:** It institutionalizes an elaborate process for conversion, requiring a declaration of intent to be submitted to district authorities 60 days in advance, followed by a post-conversion declaration.
- **Broad Complainant Base:** The law empowers not just the victim but also parents, siblings, or any person related by blood, marriage, or adoption to register a police complaint against an alleged unlawful conversion.



- **Marital Implications:** Any marriage solemnized solely for the purpose of unlawful conversion can be declared null and void by a court. However, children born from such unions retain succession rights to the property of both parents.
- **Stringent Penalties:** Offenses are cognizable and non-bailable, with punishments ranging from 7 to 10 years of imprisonment and fines up to ₹7 lakh, particularly in cases involving minors, women, or persons from SC/ST communities.
- **Administrative Shift:** The Bill moves matters of faith and marriage—traditionally handled by civil courts—into the domain of revenue and police authorities, necessitating a new state-run certification system for religious identity.



Additional Important Keypoints

- **Burden of Proof:** Similar to laws in other states, the burden of proving that a conversion was not forced or fraudulent typically rests on the person who converted or the individual who facilitated the conversion.
- **Protection of Minorities and Vulnerable Groups:** The Bill prescribes higher penalties (up to 7 years' jail and ₹5 lakh fine) if the converted individual is a minor, a woman, or belongs to the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes.
- **Mass Conversions:** The legislation defines mass conversion as the conversion of two or more persons simultaneously, attracting the highest tier of penalties and potential cancellation of institutional registrations.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 25:** Guarantees the freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion. The Supreme Court in the *Stainislaus* case (1977) held that the right to "propagate" does not include the right to "convert" another person.
- **Article 21:** The Right to Life and Personal Liberty. Critics argue that the 60-day notice violates the "Right to Privacy" and "Right to Choose a Partner," as established in the *Puttaswamy* and *Hadiya* judgments.
- **Public Order (State List):** The Maharashtra government invokes "Public Order" (Entry 1, List II) to justify the law, arguing that forcible conversions cause social unrest.
- **Article 13:** Mandates that the State shall not make any law that takes away or abridges fundamental rights; this is the primary ground on which the Bill may face judicial scrutiny.

Definition of Key Words

- **Allurement:** Offering any gift, gratification, easy money, or material benefit (including employment or free education) to induce religious conversion.
- **Cognizable Offense:** An offense in which the police can arrest a person without a warrant and has the authority to investigate without prior permission from a magistrate.
- **Non-Bailable:** A category of offense where bail is not a matter of right for the accused and is instead granted at the sole discretion of the court.



- **Undue Influence:** The unfair use of a position of power or authority to influence the will of another person to obtain their consent for conversion.

Conclusion

The Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Bill, 2026, reflects a growing trend of state-level "Anti-Conversion" laws in India. While its stated objective is to protect vulnerable individuals from predatory proselytization, its procedural requirements—such as public notices—create a tension between state oversight and the individual's right to privacy. The eventual success of this law will depend on whether the executive can prevent its misuse by vigilante groups while ensuring that the "Right to Freedom of Religion" remains a reality for all citizens.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Constitution):** Fundamental Rights (Articles 21 and 25); Judicial Review of state laws; the conflict between individual liberty and state-imposed public order.
- **GS Paper II (Social Justice):** Protection of vulnerable sections including women, minors, and SC/ST communities; the role of civil society in monitoring legislative overreach.

12. Evolution of Anti-Maoist Strategy: Continuity and Consistency in Internal Security

K. Vijay Kumar, former senior security adviser to the Union Home Ministry and former DG of the CRPF, has highlighted that India's approach to tackling Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) has maintained a "broadly consistent" trajectory across different political regimes. While the period between 2006 and 2009 was identified as the most challenging, the strategic foundation laid by previous administrations has been met with a resolute push and greater vigour in recent years, aiming for complete eradication by March 31, 2026.

Key Summary Points for UPSC

- **Political Continuity in Strategy:** The handling of the Maoist threat has seen a rare bipartisan consensus, moving from recognizing it as the "foremost internal security threat" in 2006 to the current mission-mode eradication deadline.
- **Institutional Strengthening post-2010:** Following the Dantewada ambush (2010), there was a significant shift toward centrally assisted funding, the fortification of police stations, and the creation of a dedicated intelligence wing for the CRPF in 2011.
- **The "Patch Force" Concept:** To overcome jurisdictional hurdles, the CRPF was reorganized as a "patch force" capable of operating across state borders, effectively acting as the primary face of governance in administrative vacuums.
- **Empowering Local Administration:** Significant discretionary funds were provided to District Collectors in LWE-affected zones to improve mobility and community-oriented infrastructure, which served as a counter-narrative to Maoist propaganda.
- **Specialized Tribal Units:** A strategic push in 2014-15 focused on training local tribal youth and surrendered cadres into discreet special forces, leveraging their terrain knowledge while addressing historical stigmas associated with irregular militias.





- **Demographics of Insurgency:** Experts note the specialized roles within Maoist ranks, where "child wings" are utilized for observation and "women cadres" are often found to be more rigorously trained than their male counterparts.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Counter-PsyOps:** Security officials argue that a vast majority of human rights allegations are part of a sophisticated psychological operation (PsyOps) by insurgents to demoralize security forces.
- **The Governance Vacuum:** In many remote areas, CRPF camps initially served as the only point of contact for government services, including the disbursement of cash and basic welfare via helicopters.
- **Tactical Evolution:** The transition from defensive fortification to offensive, intelligence-led operations has been the defining feature of the past decade.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 355:** Imposes a duty on the Union to protect every State against internal disturbance; this provides the constitutional basis for the Centre deploying CAPFs like the CRPF in LWE-affected States.
- **Seventh Schedule (Entry 1 & 2):** While 'Public Order' and 'Police' are State subjects (List II), the 'Armed Forces of the Union' fall under the Union List (List I), necessitating the "cooperative federalism" approach in anti-Maoist operations.
- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967:** The primary legal instrument used to ban Maoist organizations and prosecute individuals involved in subversive activities against the state.
- **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996:** A crucial legal tool for the government to win back tribal trust by ensuring self-governance and control over resources in "Red Corridor" districts.

Definition of Key Words

- **Left-Wing Extremism (LWE):** An umbrella term for various militant groups (Maoists/Naxalites) that aim to overthrow the existing democratic state through armed revolution.
- **Red Corridor:** The region in the eastern, central, and southern parts of India that experiences considerable LWE activity.
- **Surrender and Rehabilitation Policy:** A state-led framework offering financial incentives and vocational training to insurgents who lay down arms to reintegrate into mainstream society.
- **Distant-Water Fleets (Contextual Analogy):** In security terms, this refers to the "Distant-Area Operations" where forces operate far from their permanent bases in deep forest interiors.

Conclusion

The trajectory of India's anti-Maoist campaign proves that internal security is a long-term institutional endeavor that transcends electoral cycles. The success of the current 2026 deadline depends not just on kinetic military action, but on the continued integration of local communities into the security architecture. As the Maoist influence shrinks into smaller pockets, the challenge shifts from "containment" to "sustainable development" and the permanent filling of the governance vacuum.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Internal Security):** Linkages between development and spread of extremism; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.
 - **GS Paper II (Governance):** Statutory, regulatory, and various quasi-judicial bodies; Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.
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