



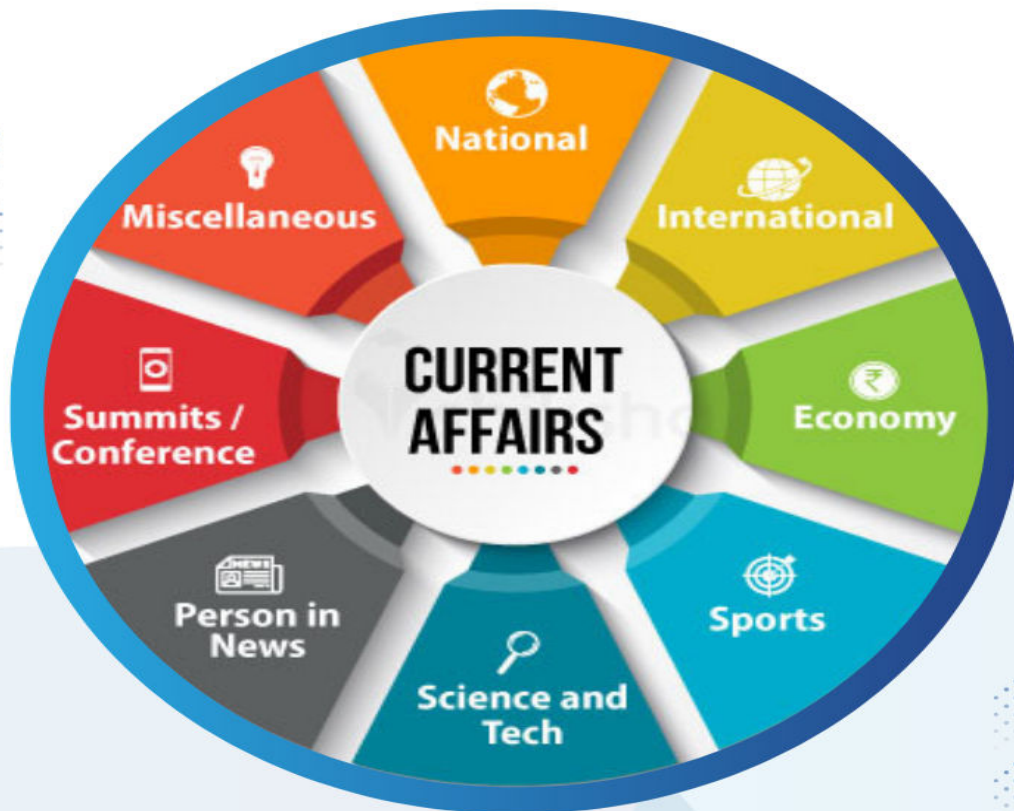
“ We help you reach for the star ”

VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 02/04/2026 (THURSDAY)



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VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. Permanent Rights vs. Procedural Deletions: SC on Electoral Rolls

The Supreme Court has clarified that the removal of a name from electoral rolls during administrative exercises like Special Intensive Revision (SIR) does not equate to a permanent forfeiture of democratic rights.

- **Non-Permanency of Exclusion:** Justice Surya Kant emphasized that being left off supplementary lists before an election does not "wash away" a citizen's right to vote forever; it is a procedural hurdle, not a final stripping of franchise.
- **Role of Special Tribunals:** To address large-scale deletions (specifically in West Bengal), 19 appellate tribunals presided over by former High Court judges have been constituted to adjudicate claims of those excluded.
- **Adjudication Efficiency:** Out of approximately 60 lakh claims, 47 lakh have already been disposed of by the cut-off date, ensuring that the majority of discrepancies are resolved before the democratic process peaks.
- **Mandate for Transparency:** The Election Commission must provide tribunals with the specific "reasons and remarks" recorded by adjudicating officers to justify why a deletion or "logical discrepancy" was warranted.
- **Prevention of Oppression:** The Court noted that failure to bring the SIR process to a logical conclusion via a robust appellate mechanism would result in an "extremely oppressive" situation for the citizenry.
- **Judicial Oversight:** The involvement of seasoned judges in the appellate process acts as a safeguard against administrative arbitrariness and ensures that no genuine voter is disenfranchised due to clerical or systemic errors.

Key Definitions

- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR):** A door-to-door or comprehensive administrative process conducted by the Election Commission to update electoral rolls, typically involving the addition of new voters and deletion of ineligible ones.
- **Electoral Roll:** A formal list of all persons in a constituency who are registered and entitled to vote in an election.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 324:** Grants the Election Commission of India the power of superintendence, direction, and control of the preparation of electoral rolls.
- **Article 326:** Establishes "Universal Adult Suffrage," declaring that elections shall be on the basis of adult suffrage, where every citizen not otherwise disqualified is entitled to be registered as a voter.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1950:** Sections 21 to 23 govern the preparation and revision of electoral rolls and the right to register claims and objections.
- **Registration of Electors Rules, 1960:** Provides the procedural framework for the inclusion of names and the hearing of appeals regarding the electoral list.



Conclusion: The Supreme Court's intervention reinforces the principle that the right to vote, while a statutory right, is fundamental to the "Basic Structure" of democracy. By insisting on a transparent appellate process, the judiciary has ensured that administrative efficiency does not override constitutional inclusivity. The ruling mandates that the Election Commission's power to clean rolls must be balanced against the individual's right to participate in the electoral process.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity):** Important for topics related to "Salient features of the Representation of People's Act," "Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies" (ECI), and "Judicial Activism."
- **Ethics (GS IV):** Relevant to the discussion on administrative fairness and the ethical responsibility of the State to protect the democratic agency of marginalized or erroneously excluded populations.

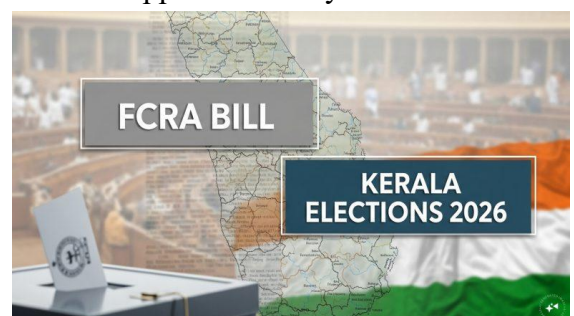
2. FCRA Amendment Bill 2026: Key Developments and Controversies

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, has emerged as a major political flashpoint in election-bound Kerala, drawing sharp criticism from religious institutions and opposition parties over its potential impact on charitable and minority-run organizations.

- **Core Proposal:** The 2026 Bill introduces a "Designated Authority" appointed by the Union government with the power to take over, manage, or dispose of assets (such as schools, hospitals, and places of worship) created using foreign funds if an organization's FCRA registration is cancelled, surrendered, or expires.
- **Automatic Cessation:** A significant shift in the legal framework is the "automatic cessation" of registration if a renewal application is not filed, is denied, or is not obtained before the expiry date, triggering the immediate provisional vesting of assets in the government-appointed authority.
- **Minority Concerns:** The Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council (KCBC) and various Muslim organizations have labeled the Bill "draconian," arguing it grants the bureaucracy "untrammelled authority" to seize assets of institutions that provide critical affordable healthcare and education.
- **Political Firefighting:** Faced with protests and the risk of alienating the Christian community—a key electoral bloc—the BJP leadership has assured that the Centre will factor in the Church's reservations before proceeding, leading to a temporary postponement of the Bill in the Lok Sabha.
- **Administrative Justification:** The Union government maintains the amendment is necessary to address "administrative uncertainty" and "legal gaps" in handling assets of defunct or non-compliant NGOs, aiming to ensure foreign funds are not used for activities detrimental to national interest.
- **Procedural Shifts:** While the Bill proposes expanding the definition of "key functionaries" to increase personal liability, it also suggests reducing the maximum imprisonment for certain FCRA violations from 5 years to 1 year, alongside requiring prior Central approval for any FCRA-related investigations.

Key Definitions

- **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA):** A central legislation enacted to regulate the acceptance and utilization of foreign funds by individuals or associations to ensure such inflows do not adversely affect national interest or security.





- **Designated Authority:** A proposed statutory official or body notified by the Central Government empowered to provisionally or permanently take over assets created wholly or partly from foreign contributions when an entity's registration ceases.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 25 & 26:** Protect the freedom of religion and the right of religious denominations to manage their own affairs and own/acquire property; critics argue the Bill may infringe upon these protections.
- **Article 30:** Grants minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions; concerns exist regarding the state's power to take over such assets.
- **FCRA, 2010:** The parent Act which was previously amended in 2020 to restrict administrative expenses to 20% and mandate a centralized SBI account in New Delhi for receiving foreign funds.
- **Section 15 of FCRA:** The existing provision regarding the vesting of assets, which the 2026 Bill seeks to replace with a more comprehensive and "stringent" framework.

Conclusion: The FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026, represents a significant escalation in the State's oversight of the civil society sector. While the government frames it as a measure for transparency and national security, the lack of an independent appellate mechanism and the provision for asset takeover have sparked fears of executive overreach. In the context of Kerala's pluralistic social fabric, the Bill has shifted from a regulatory matter to a critical test of the balance between national security and the institutional autonomy of minority communities.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Polity):** Relevant for "Development processes and the development industry — the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations," and "Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies."
- **GS Paper III (Internal Security):** Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security via funding.

3. Statutory Recognition of Amaravati as Andhra Pradesh's Sole Capital

The Lok Sabha has passed the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2026, marking a definitive end to the years of administrative and legal uncertainty regarding the state's capital.

- **Statutory Status:** The Bill formally amends the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014, to recognize Amaravati as the "sole and permanent" capital of the state, providing it with legal sanctity that was previously missing.
- **Retrospective Effect:** Once enacted, the law will come into force with effect from June 2, 2024, the date marking the end of the 10-year period during which Hyderabad served as the common capital for Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Reversal of Three-Capital Model:** The legislation effectively forecloses the "decentralized" model proposed by the previous government, which sought to distribute power across three capitals: Visakhapatnam (Administrative), Amaravati (Legislative), and Kurnool (Judicial).
- **Bipartisan Support & Consensus:** The Bill saw support from the Treasury benches and the principal opposition party, Congress, reflecting a broad parliamentary consensus on ensuring stability for the state's urban and economic planning.



- **Economic & Infrastructure Push:** By providing "statutory clarity," the Bill aims to restore investor confidence in the Amaravati project, which encompasses a 217 sq km region and includes massive infrastructure works worth over ₹90,000 crore.
- **Protection of Stakeholders:** The debate highlighted the plight of farmers who pooled 34,000 acres of land for the capital; the new legal framework is expected to streamline the fulfillment of promises made to these landholders.

Key Definitions

- **Capital City:** The seat of government in a state or nation, usually housing the executive, legislative, and judicial branches.
- **Statutory Backing:** Legal authority or recognition derived from an Act passed by the Parliament or State Legislature, making the provision binding and difficult to alter through mere executive orders.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 3 & 4:** Empower Parliament to form new states and make supplemental, incidental, and consequential provisions, including the designation of capitals.
- **Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014:** The parent legislation that facilitated the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh. Section 5 of this Act originally designated Hyderabad as the joint capital for a period not exceeding 10 years.
- **Entry 32, List II (State List):** Relates to "Public works, lands and buildings vested in or in the possession of the State," which gives states the primary role in developing their capital.
- **Doctrine of Promissory Estoppel:** A legal principle relevant to the Amaravati case, where the government is held to its promises made to farmers who gave up land based on the assurance of a developed capital city.

Conclusion: The passage of the 2026 Amendment Bill is a landmark moment in India's federal history, as it is one of the rare instances where Parliament has intervened to settle a state's capital dispute via legislation. While the "three-capital" model was argued on the grounds of regional equity, the "sole capital" model at Amaravati is now legally cemented to ensure administrative efficiency and continuity. This move balances the state's developmental aspirations with the need for a stable, long-term governance hub.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Issues related to federalism, "Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies," and the powers of Parliament under Articles 3 and 4.
- **GS Paper III (Economy & Infrastructure):** Urban planning, land pooling models (Amaravati model), and the impact of policy uncertainty on regional investment and ease of doing business.

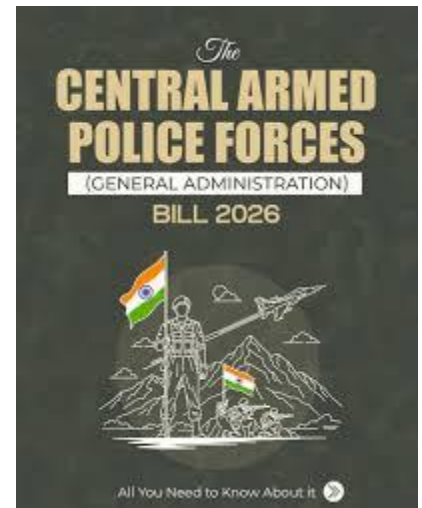
4. Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, 2026

The Rajya Sabha recently passed the Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill, 2026, aimed at streamlining the administrative framework of India's internal security forces despite significant procedural pushback from the Opposition.

- **Unified Legal Framework:** The Bill seeks to create a single, cohesive legal structure governing personnel across different Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), replacing the existing fragmented system of separate service rules for the five major forces.



- **Administrative Efficiency:** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) argues that a unified code will improve coordination between CAPFs, State Police, and civil administration, thereby strengthening the national security architecture.
- **Procedural Controversy:** The MHA sought an exemption from Lok Sabha Rule 116, which mandates a two-day notice period between the introduction of a Bill and its consideration, citing "lack of time" as the primary reason for the urgency.
- **Federalism Concerns:** While the Government maintains the Bill strengthens the federal structure, Opposition members argue it oversteps the principle of separation of powers and may override previous Supreme Court verdicts regarding force management.
- **Personnel Welfare:** The legislation addresses long-standing issues of stagnation in career progression and seeks to standardize recruitment, training, and disciplinary protocols across the various wings of the paramilitary.
- **Legislative Resistance:** The Bill was passed via voice vote in the Upper House amidst an Opposition walkout, with critics demanding the legislation be sent to a Select Committee for deeper scrutiny of its impact on State-Centre relations.



Key Definitions

- **CAPF (Central Armed Police Forces):** These refer to the five security forces under the authority of the Ministry of Home Affairs: BSF, CRPF, CISF, ITBP, and SSB. (Note: While AR and NSG are often grouped, the Bill specifically targets the "five" primary CAPFs).
- **Rule 116 (Lok Sabha):** A procedural rule stipulating that a Bill must be introduced at least two days prior to its consideration to allow members sufficient time to study the legislation and suggest amendments.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 355:** Imposes a duty on the Union to protect States against external aggression and internal disturbance; CAPFs are the primary instrument for fulfilling this obligation.
- **Entry 2 of Union List (Schedule VII):** Grants Parliament the power to legislate on the constitution and regulation of the armed forces or any other forces raised by the Union.
- **Entry 2 of State List (Schedule VII):** Covers "Police," creating a delicate jurisdictional balance when CAPFs are deployed to assist State administrations in maintaining law and order.
- **Separation of Powers:** A basic structure doctrine of the Constitution which ensures that the executive does not exercise arbitrary control over armed personnel without legislative and judicial checks.

Conclusion: The CAPF (General Administration) Bill, 2026, is a significant attempt to modernize the management of India's largest internal security apparatus. By moving from force-specific silos to a unified administrative code, the government aims to enhance operational synergy. However, the circumvention of standard parliamentary notice periods and the lack of consensus on its impact on federalism suggest that the implementation phase will require careful navigation to maintain the delicate balance between Central authority and State police autonomy.



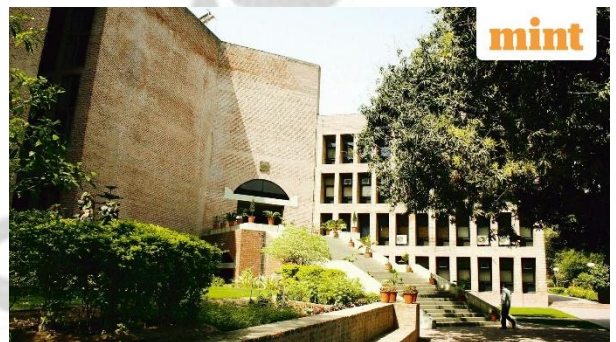
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Polity):** Relevant for "Role of Civil Services in a Democracy," "Parliamentary procedures and conduct of business," and "Federal structure and challenges."
- **GS Paper III (Security):** Important for "Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate" and "Challenges to internal security through communication networks."

5. NITI Aayog Tasks IIM-A to Evaluate PLI Scheme Efficacy

The Union Government has commissioned the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad (IIM-A), under the aegis of NITI Aayog, to conduct a rigorous assessment of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes following concerns over sluggish disbursement and uneven sectoral performance.

- **Scope of Study:** IIM-A will evaluate all 14 PLI sectors—ranging from electronics to specialty steel—focusing on their actual impact on incremental production, export expansion, job creation, and India's integration into global supply chains.
- **Disbursement Gap:** A primary trigger for the study is the significant lag in incentive payouts; as of December 2025, only ₹28,748 crore (approx. 15%) of the allocated ₹1.91 trillion had been disbursed, despite the schemes attracting over ₹2.16 trillion in committed investments.
- **Sectoral Asymmetry:** While sectors like large-scale electronics and pharmaceuticals have shown robust progress, others such as high-efficiency solar PV modules and advanced chemistry cell (ACC) batteries have reported zero incentive disbursement so far.
- **Structural Review:** The evaluation aims to determine whether the existing "incremental output" model requires restructuring or if certain sectors need a relaxation of investment and turnover criteria to facilitate wider participation, particularly by mid-size firms.
- **Strategic Re-alignment:** Insights from the study will guide NITI Aayog and the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) in deciding whether to expand the current outlays or shift focus toward emerging frontier technologies and "Viksit Bharat" goals.
- **Correction of Underperformance:** By identifying "early indicators" of failure, the government intends to implement remedial measures to ensure that the remaining 85% of the allocated budget effectively translates into a manufacturing-led GDP boost.



Key Definitions

- **Production Linked Incentive (PLI):** A performance-linked incentive framework where the government provides financial rewards to companies based on their incremental sales from products manufactured in domestic units over a defined base year.
- **Incremental Production:** The additional output generated by a manufacturer over and above a pre-determined baseline, which serves as the primary metric for calculating PLI benefits.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 39(b) & (c):** Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) that guide the state to ensure the ownership and control of material resources are distributed to subserve the common good and prevent the concentration of wealth.



- **Entry 52, List I (Union List):** Grants Parliament the power to regulate industries, the control of which by the Union is declared by law to be expedient in the public interest.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budgetary Management (FRBM) Act:** Relevant for the allocation and management of large-scale industrial subsidies like the ₹1.91 trillion PLI corpus.

Conclusion: The engagement of IIM-A represents a shift toward data-driven industrial policy. While the PLI scheme has successfully branded India as a viable manufacturing alternative to China, the "15% disbursement" figure highlights a mismatch between policy intent and ground-level execution. The upcoming study is critical to transforming the PLI from a capital-heavy commitment into a high-yield outcome, ensuring that India's manufacturing growth is both inclusive and globally competitive.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Economy):** Central to topics like "Industrial Policy," "Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth," and "Mobilization of resources."
- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Analysis of "Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors" and the role of "Think Tanks" (NITI Aayog) in policy evaluation.

6. RBI Tightens Norms on Forex Derivatives and Related-Party Trades

In a coordinated effort to stabilize the Indian Rupee and curb speculative volatility, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has introduced stringent measures targeting the rebooking of forex contracts and transactions between related entities.

- **Ban on Rebooking Hedges:** The RBI has prohibited companies and traders from re-entering or "rebooking" cancelled forex derivative contracts, effectively ending the practice of using hedging as a tool for taking directional bets on currency movements.
- **Related-Party Restrictions:** Banks are now barred from undertaking foreign exchange derivative contracts with "related parties" as defined under Indian Accounting Standard (Ind AS) 24 (referred to in context as Ind AS 2), preventing potential internal manipulation or circular trading.
- **Curbing Speculative Volatility:** These measures follow a recent cap on banks' Net Open Positions (NOP) at \$100 million per day, aimed at reducing "artificial demand" for the US Dollar and supporting the Rupee, which has faced significant pressure.
- **Data-Driven Oversight:** The central bank has initiated an intensive data-collection exercise from commercial banks regarding corporate client positions to distinguish between genuine on-ground hedging and speculative positioning.
- **Currency Stability Objectives:** The intervention comes in the wake of the Rupee hitting record lows, having depreciated 11% in fiscal year 2026 due to sustained selling by Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) and geopolitical tensions in West Asia.
- **Closing Regulatory Loopholes:** Market experts view these steps as a definitive shift towards tightening speculative activity, ensuring that derivative markets are utilized strictly for risk mitigation rather than profit-seeking from exchange rate fluctuations.





Key Definitions

- **Forex Derivatives:** Financial instruments (like forwards, futures, or options) whose value is derived from the exchange rate of two or more currencies, primarily used by businesses to hedge against currency risk.
- **Net Open Position (NOP):** The difference between the total assets and total liabilities of a bank in a particular foreign currency; a cap on this limit restricts the bank's ability to hold large unhedged currency exposures.
- **Related-Party Transactions:** Business deals or arrangements between two parties who are joined by a special relationship prior to the deal (e.g., a bank and its subsidiary), often subject to strict regulation to prevent conflict of interest.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **RBI Act, 1934:** Grants the central bank the mandate to regulate the monetary system and manage the foreign exchange market to maintain price stability.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** The primary legislation that empowers the RBI to manage and regulate all foreign exchange transactions in India in a manner that promotes orderly development and maintenance of the forex market.
- **Article 246 (List I, Entry 36):** The Union List gives the Parliament (and by extension the RBI via delegated legislation) exclusive power over "Currency, coinage and legal tender; foreign exchange."
- **Ind AS 24:** The accounting standard that mandates disclosures regarding related-party relationships and transactions to ensure financial statements are not influenced by such associations.

Conclusion: The RBI's latest intervention signifies a "zero-tolerance" approach toward currency speculation that threatens macroeconomic stability. By targeting the rebooking of contracts and related-party trades, the regulator has moved to ensure that the forex derivative market remains a functional space for risk management rather than a playground for arbitrage. While these measures may reduce market liquidity in the short term, they are essential for defending the Rupee against one-sided depreciation and maintaining investor confidence in the Indian financial system.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Economy):** Highly relevant for topics such as "Monetary Policy," "External Sector," "Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, and development."
- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Role of regulatory bodies like the RBI in maintaining financial stability and the impact of executive/regulatory decisions on the global standing of the Indian currency.

7. IBC Amendment Bill 2026: Expansion of Scrutiny Over Pre-Bankruptcy Deals

The Rajya Sabha has passed the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026, which significantly enhances the powers of the Resolution Professional (RP) and the Adjudicatory Authority to investigate and reverse transactions made by a distressed firm prior to the commencement of insolvency proceedings.

- **Extended Look-Back Period:** The amendment expands the "look-back" period for identifying "avoidance transactions," such as undervalued, preferential, or fraudulent deals, allowing for deeper historical scrutiny of a company's financial conduct before it entered bankruptcy.



- **Inclusion of Related-Party Transactions:** The Bill specifically targets asset stripping and fund diversion by promoters through related-party transactions, ensuring that assets moved out of the company to evade creditors can be clawed back into the liquidation or resolution estate.
- **Streamlining the CIRP:** By providing a clearer legal framework for the scrutiny of pre-bankruptcy deals, the Bill aims to reduce litigation delays in the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP), thereby improving the recovery rate for financial and operational creditors.
- **Empowering the Resolution Professional:** RPs are now mandated to file applications for the reversal of "vulnerable transactions" within a stricter timeline, and the Adjudicating Authority (NCLT) is empowered to pass summary orders to restore the status quo of the corporate debtor's assets.
- **Curbing Promoter Malpractice:** The amendment serves as a deterrent against "strategic defaults" where promoters intentionally weaken the company's balance sheet through clandestine transfers to shell companies or family-held entities before filing for insolvency.
- **Inter-Agency Coordination:** The Minister noted that the expanded scrutiny would involve better data sharing between the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), the Enforcement Directorate (ED), and the SFIO to track "proceeds of crime" or diverted funds.



Key Definitions

- **Avoidance Transactions:** Specific transactions (Preferential, Undervalued, Fraudulent, or Extortionate) made by the debtor before the insolvency start date that are deemed unfair to creditors and can be nullified by the NCLT.
- **Look-Back Period:** The specific timeframe (currently 1 to 2 years depending on the nature of the transaction) prior to the insolvency commencement date during which the company's financial deals are eligible for judicial review.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016:** The principal legislation that consolidated the laws relating to reorganization and insolvency resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms, and individuals.
- **Sections 43 to 51 of IBC:** These sections deal specifically with the "Avoidance of Transactions," including preferential and undervalued transactions, which the 2026 Bill seeks to strengthen.
- **Entry 9, List III (Concurrent List):** Bankruptcy and Insolvency are subjects under the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule, giving both Parliament and State Legislatures the power to make laws, though Central law prevails in case of conflict.
- **Article 19(1)(g) & Article 300A:** While citizens have the right to practice any profession or carry on trade, the State can impose reasonable restrictions; similarly, the right to property is a legal right that can be regulated by laws like the IBC to ensure the "common good."

Conclusion: The 2026 IBC Amendment is a critical step toward maturing India's insolvency regime. By extending the look-back period and tightening the net around related-party deals, the government is addressing the "information asymmetry" that often allows promoters to hollow out firms before creditors can



intervene. This move reinforces the "creditor-in-control" model and ensures that the IBC remains a tool for genuine business resolution rather than a safe haven for strategic defaulters.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Economy):** Essential for topics like "Inclusive growth and issues arising from it," "Government Budgeting," and "Effects of liberalization on the economy."
- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Analysis of "Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies" like the NCLT and IBBI.

8. Judicial Accountability, Contempt Power, and Academic Freedom

The recent controversy surrounding the Supreme Court's reaction to NCERT Class 8 textbooks has reignited the national debate on the boundaries of "Criminal Contempt" and the necessity of protecting academic freedom within a democratic framework.

- **The NCERT Controversy:** The Supreme Court recently shelved a textbook and sidelined its authors due to content perceived as denigrating the judiciary, leading to the formation of a new committee of legal experts to oversee educational content regarding the legal system.
- **Nature of Contempt Power:** Contempt is broadly classified into "Civil" (disobedience of court orders) and "Criminal" (scandalizing the court or lowering its authority). The latter is intended to protect the institution's public image, which is the bedrock of judicial power.
- **The "Broad Shoulders" Doctrine:** Prominent jurists have historically advocated for restraint, suggesting that the judiciary's dignity is best maintained through the quality of its judgments rather than the suppression of criticism or the use of contempt as a shield for judicial ego.
- **Substratum of Judicial Power:** Unlike the Executive or Legislature, the Judiciary possesses neither "the sword" nor "the purse"; its authority relies entirely on public trust and goodwill, which can be undermined by reckless or ill-motivated reports.
- **Balancing Criticism and Institutions:** While "fair comment" on matters of public interest is a protected right, the law draws a line at criticism that is unfounded in fact or intended to shake public confidence, as this diminishes the court's capacity to exercise "Judicial Review."
- **Internal Challenges:** The judiciary faces systemic hurdles in tackling internal issues like corruption and infrastructure; however, experts argue that "onboarding criticism" affirms the Rule of Law and helps honest judges by identifying necessary reforms.



Key Definitions

- **Criminal Contempt:** Any publication or act which scandalizes or lowers the authority of a court, prejudices judicial proceedings, or obstructs the administration of justice.
- **Judicial Review:** The power of the judiciary to examine the constitutionality of legislative enactments and executive orders, ensuring they align with the fundamental law of the land.



- **Scandalizing the Court:** An archaic but active legal term referring to any hostile criticism that attributes improper motives to judges or the court, thereby shaking public confidence in the legal system.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 129:** Declares the Supreme Court to be a "Court of Record" and grants it the power to punish for contempt of itself.
- **Article 215:** Grants similar powers to High Courts to act as courts of record and punish for contempt.
- **Article 19(1)(a) vs. 19(2):** While the Constitution guarantees "Freedom of Speech and Expression," Article 19(2) allows the State to impose reasonable restrictions in relation to "Contempt of Court."
- **Contempt of Courts Act, 1971:** The statutory framework that defines civil and criminal contempt and outlines the procedures and limitations for initiating such proceedings.

Conclusion: The intersection of academic content and judicial dignity highlights a delicate constitutional balance. While the judiciary must protect its institutional integrity from motivated denigration, it must also act as the ultimate guardian of free speech. A "broad-shouldered" approach to criticism, coupled with a transparent curriculum that honestly apprises students of both the triumphs and challenges of the legal system, is essential for a robust democracy. Ultimately, judicial respect is earned through fairness and objectivity, not through the silencing of academic discourse.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity):** Highly relevant for topics such as "Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary," "Separation of powers between various organs," and "Fundamental Rights" (specifically Freedom of Speech vs. Contempt).
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Relevant to the "Searchlight Inward" concept—professional ethics for judges and the moral responsibility of institutions to tolerate constructive criticism.
- **Essay/Current Affairs:** The role of NCERT in nation-building and the debate over "Judicial Activism" vs. "Judicial Restraint."

9. West Asian Security Reset: Emerging Geopolitics Amidst US-Iran Conflict

The ongoing conflict between the United States, Israel, and Iran has entered a critical phase, forcing a fundamental re-evaluation of the security architecture in West Asia as regional powers attempt to navigate the "scorched earth" policies and shifting American commitments.

- **Shift in Regional Strategy:** The closure of the Strait of Hormuz and Iran's strategy of targeting any US-linked interests in the Persian Gulf have moved regional states from a policy of "insurance ecosystems" (like the 2023 Saudi-Iran détente) toward a demand for a total strategic reset.
- **US Policy Ambiguity:** The Trump administration's suggestion that Gulf partners should financially contribute to the costs of the conflict has created anxieties regarding the reliability of the US security umbrella, leading states to seek more "unilaterally active" roles.
- **Pakistan's Diplomatic Maneuvering:** Leveraging its nuclear status and Islamic identity, Pakistan—under the leadership of Field Marshal Asim Munir—is attempting to insert itself as a mediator, seeking to strengthen ties with the US while re-entering the West Asian fold.



- **Intra-Gulf Consolidation:** Traditional rivals, such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar, are increasingly sidelining historical differences to form a united front against immediate regional threats, even as they criticize the efficacy of established bodies like the Arab League.
- **Israeli Air Dominance:** Israel's demonstration of unfettered air power from the Red Sea to the Persian Gulf, including high-profile operations in 2025, has created a secondary layer of anxiety for Arab states regarding long-term regional power balances.
- **Search for New Guarantors:** As the US achieves energy self-sufficiency, its leverage in the region is shifting from "protecting oil supply" to "managing price volatility," prompting Gulf states to look toward Asian energy buyers, including India, as potential future security stakeholders.



Key Definitions

- **Strait of Hormuz:** A strategic chokepoint between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman; it is the world's most important oil artery, through which approximately 1/5th of global oil consumption passes.
- **Scorched Earth Policy:** A military strategy that involves destroying anything that might be useful to the enemy while advancing through or withdrawing from a geographic location.
- **Strategic Hedging:** A state's use of contradictory or multiple policy bets to protect itself against uncertainty, such as maintaining economic ties with Iran while relying on the US for defense.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (UN Charter):** Concerns the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations.
- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution (DPSP):** Mandates the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and encourage settlement of international disputes by arbitration.
- **Maritime Zones Act, 1976:** Indian legislation defining the limits of the territorial waters, contiguous zone, and exclusive economic zone (EEZ), relevant to protecting Indian energy interests in the Persian Gulf.

Conclusion: The West Asian security architecture is undergoing its most significant transformation since the post-WWII era. The erosion of the "Security for Oil" pact between the US and the Gulf, combined with Iran's regional brinkmanship, has left a vacuum. For the first time, regional powers are contemplating a security system that necessitates either a complete buy-in from Iran or a new cooperative framework involving major Asian consumers. The outcome of this war will determine whether the region moves toward a self-reliant Islamic security bloc or remains a fragmented playground for external powers.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Essential for topics like "Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests" and "Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India."



- **GS Paper III (Energy Security):** Impact of West Asian instability on India's energy security, oil prices, and the "Connect West" policy.
- **Key Focus:** The shifting role of Pakistan in the Middle East and its implications for India's strategic interests in the Persian Gulf.

10. Transitioning India's Cooking Fuel: From LPG to Piped Natural Gas (PNG)

India is currently undergoing a strategic shift in its household energy landscape, moving away from a high reliance on imported LPG cylinders toward a domestically integrated Piped Natural Gas (PNG) network to ensure energy security.

- **The "Switch or Surrender" Mandate:** Under the Natural Gas and Petroleum Products Distribution Order, 2026, the government has mandated that households in areas with functional PNG infrastructure must transition to piped gas; failure to do so within three months will result in the cessation of their LPG supply.
- **Strategic Necessity vs. Imports:** India currently consumes 34 million tonnes of LPG annually, of which 60% is imported. With 90% of these imports traditionally transiting through the now-disrupted Strait of Hormuz, the push for PNG is a direct response to external supply shocks and the need for fuel diversification.
- **Supply & Production Potential:** While India has 33 crore LPG connections, officials estimate that domestic natural gas production could eventually cater to 30 crore connections. A projected 25% increase in domestic output, aided by the KG-DWN 98/2 block in the Krishna-Godavari basin, is central to this goal.
- **Infrastructure Milestones:** As of early 2026, India's gas pipeline network has expanded to over 25,000 km, with another 10,000 km under construction. The government aims to reach 12 crore PNG connections by 2034, requiring a Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of approximately 24%.
- **Operational Advantages:** PNG is a "drop-in" replacement for LPG in kitchens, offering higher safety as it is lighter than air (dispersing quickly during leaks). Economically, it is positioned to be more competitive, with monthly costs typically lower than those of a 14.2 kg LPG cylinder.
- **Last-Mile Challenges:** Despite aggressive licensing for over 300 geographical areas, nearly 90 regions remain unconnected to main trunk pipelines. Urban "last-mile" connectivity and the lack of long-term storage (unlike the European model) remain significant hurdles to achieving total saturation.



Key Definitions

- **LPG (Liquefied Petroleum Gas):** A flammable mixture of hydrocarbon gases (propane and butane), stored in pressurized cylinders in liquid form.
- **PNG (Piped Natural Gas):** Natural gas (primarily methane) delivered to consumers through a network of pipelines at low pressure.
- **LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas):** Natural gas cooled to -160°C to turn it into liquid for compact shipping; it must be "regasified" at terminals before pipeline distribution.



- **CNG (Compressed Natural Gas):** Natural gas compressed to high pressure (200-250 kg/cm²), used primarily as a cleaner fuel for internal combustion engines in vehicles.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** The legal bedrock for the 2026 Order, allowing the government to regulate the distribution of petroleum and gas as essential products.
- **Entry 53, List I (Union List):** Grants the Union exclusive jurisdiction over "Regulation and development of oilfields and mineral oil resources; petroleum and petroleum products."
- **Article 38 & 39 (DPSP):** Directs the State to promote the welfare of people by securing a social order where resources are used for the common good (Energy Justice).
- **PNGRB Act, 2006:** Established the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board to protect the interests of consumers and entities engaged in specified activities relating to petroleum and natural gas.

Conclusion: The transition from LPG to PNG is no longer merely an environmental preference but a national security priority. By leveraging the "One Nation, One Gas Grid" framework and implementing the 2026 mandate, India seeks to insulate its households from the volatility of West Asian geopolitics. While the "just-in-time" nature of the LNG system poses risks, the long-term benefit lies in a more stable, cost-effective, and domestically anchored energy ecosystem.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Economy & Energy):** Critical for topics like "Energy," "Infrastructure," and "Investment Models."
- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Government interventions in essential services and the role of regulatory bodies like PNGRB.
- **Geography/IR:** Importance of maritime chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz and the domestic potential of the KG Basin.

11. Qdenga: India's First Dengue Vaccine and the Road Ahead

The Subject Expert Committee (SEC) under the Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) has recently cleared Takeda's tetravalent dengue vaccine, TAK-003 (Qdenga), for individuals aged 4 to 60 years, marking a paradigm shift from reactive vector control to preventive immunization.

- **Disease Modification vs. Transmission Block:** Qdenga is primarily a "disease-modifying" vaccine rather than a transmission-blocking one; it significantly reduces the risk of severe dengue and hospitalization but does not entirely prevent infection or eliminate outbreaks.
- **Backbone and Serotype Efficacy:** Developed on a DENV-2 genetic backbone, the vaccine shows high efficacy against Serotype 2 and reasonable protection against Serotype 1, but its performance against Serotypes 3 and 4 is notably lower, especially in "dengue-naive" individuals (those never previously infected).
- **Simplified Administration:** Unlike its predecessor (Dengvaxia), Qdenga does not require costly pre-vaccination screening to check for prior exposure, making it more viable for large-scale real-world settings in endemic regions.





- **Evolving Epidemiology:** A critical challenge in India is the rising prominence of DENV-3; since the vaccine has limited efficacy against this serotype, its overall population-level impact may be constrained if DENV-3 becomes the dominant circulating strain.
- **Economic and Access Barriers:** With an estimated cost of ₹6,000-12,000 for the full two-dose course (administered three months apart), affordability remains a major hurdle for public health integration, likely limiting initial uptake to the private sector.
- **Indigenous Pipeline:** India is currently conducting Phase III trials for "DengiAll" (developed by Panacea Biotec and ICMR), a single-dose candidate that promises more balanced protection across all four serotypes and could be available by 2027.

Key Definitions

- **Tetravalent Vaccine:** A vaccine designed to elicit an immune response against four different antigen sources—in this case, all four serotypes of the dengue virus (DENV-1, 2, 3, and 4).
- **Serotypes:** Distinct variations within a species of virus; for dengue, infection with one serotype provides lifelong immunity to that specific type but only short-term, partial protection against others.
- **Antibody-Dependent Enhancement (ADE):** A phenomenon where previous infection or suboptimal vaccination can lead to more severe disease during a subsequent infection with a different serotype.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 47:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that obligates the State to regard the improvement of public health as among its primary duties.
- **Article 21:** The Right to Life, which the judiciary has interpreted to include the "Right to Health," encompassing access to essential life-saving vaccines.
- **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940:** The primary legislation governing the import, manufacture, and distribution of drugs (including vaccines) in India, overseen by the CDSCO and DCGI.
- **National Health Policy, 2017:** Aims to attain the highest possible level of health and well-being for all through a preventive and promotive health care orientation.

Conclusion: Qdenga represents a significant technological milestone in India's struggle against dengue, offering a vital tool to decompress the healthcare system during peak seasons by preventing severe clinical outcomes. However, it is not a "silver bullet." Its success depends on continuous genomic surveillance of circulating serotypes and its integration into a broader strategy that maintains rigorous vector control. The ultimate goal for India remains the development of an affordable, single-dose indigenous vaccine that provides uniform protection against the country's diverse viral landscape.

UPSC Relevance

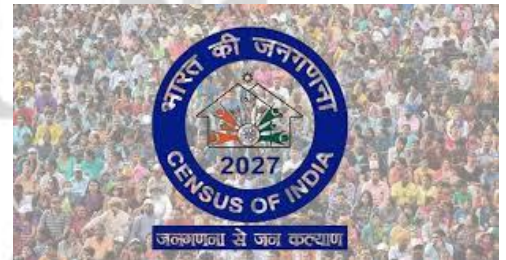
- **GS Paper II (Social Justice/Health):** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health; Government policies and interventions.
- **GS Paper III (Science & Technology):** Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.
- **Prelims Focus:** Difference between DENV serotypes, the role of DCGI/SEC, and the "DengiAll" trial status.



12. Digital Transformation of Indian Census: Launch of Self-Enumeration 2027

The Union Home Ministry has officially commenced the first phase of the Population Census 2027, introducing a digital "Self-Enumeration" portal that allows citizens to provide household data online before the traditional door-to-door survey.

- **Hybrid Data Collection:** While the first day saw 55,000 households using the web-based portal, the exercise remains a hybrid model; details filled online will be verified by physical enumerators during a field visit 15 days later to ensure data integrity.
- **Phase-I Focus (HLO):** The current exercise involves the "Houselisting Operations and Housing Census" (HLO), consisting of 33 specific questions regarding housing conditions, amenities, and assets, preceding the full population count.
- **Geographic Rollout:** Self-enumeration has been initiated in eight States and UTs (including Goa, Karnataka, Odisha, and Delhi areas), with a specialized schedule for snow-bound regions like Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh to be completed by September 30.
- **Technological Security:** The portal (se.census.gov.in) supports 16 regional languages and uses mobile-linked registration (one number per household) to generate a unique Self-Enumeration ID (SE ID) for tracking and verification.
- **Two-Stage Process:** The second phase, scheduled for February 2027, will move beyond housing to "Population Enumeration," collecting individual-specific data such as religion, caste, and socio-economic indicators.
- **Administrative Significance:** High-ranking constitutional authorities, including the President and Prime Minister, participated on day one to emphasize the national importance of the decennial exercise, which was delayed from its original 2021 schedule.



Key Definitions

- **Houselisting Operations (HLO):** The preliminary phase of the Census where every house and household is identified and listed to create a framework for the subsequent population count.
- **Self-Enumeration:** A digital facility allowing respondents to voluntarily fill out their census schedule online, reducing the time required during the physical visit of the enumerator.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Census Act, 1948:** The statutory framework that makes it a legal obligation for citizens to provide truthful information and mandates the government to keep individual data confidential.
- **Article 246:** Places "Census" under the Union List (Entry 69) of the Seventh Schedule, granting the Parliament exclusive power to legislate and conduct this exercise.
- **Rule 6A of Census Rules, 1990:** Amended to allow for electronic self-enumeration and the use of digital formats for data collection.
- **Section 15 (Census Act):** Provides legal immunity to the data; census records are not admissible as evidence in any civil or criminal proceeding, ensuring privacy.

Conclusion: The 2027 Census marks a milestone in India's journey toward "Digital Governance." By integrating self-enumeration, the government aims to improve data accuracy and reduce the administrative burden on the vast machinery involved. While the technology offers convenience, the final success of the



exercise will depend on bridging the digital divide and ensuring that the physical verification process remains robust enough to account for India's diverse and mobile population.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Issues relating to "Government policies and interventions" and "E-governance applications, models, and successes."
- **GS Paper I (Sociology/Geography):** Important for "Population and associated issues" and "Urbanization, their problems and their remedies."
- **GS Paper III (Technology):** Use of digital platforms for massive data collection and privacy concerns related to large-scale databases.



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