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# **VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE**

## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION**

**DATE: 17/04/2026 (FRIDAY)**



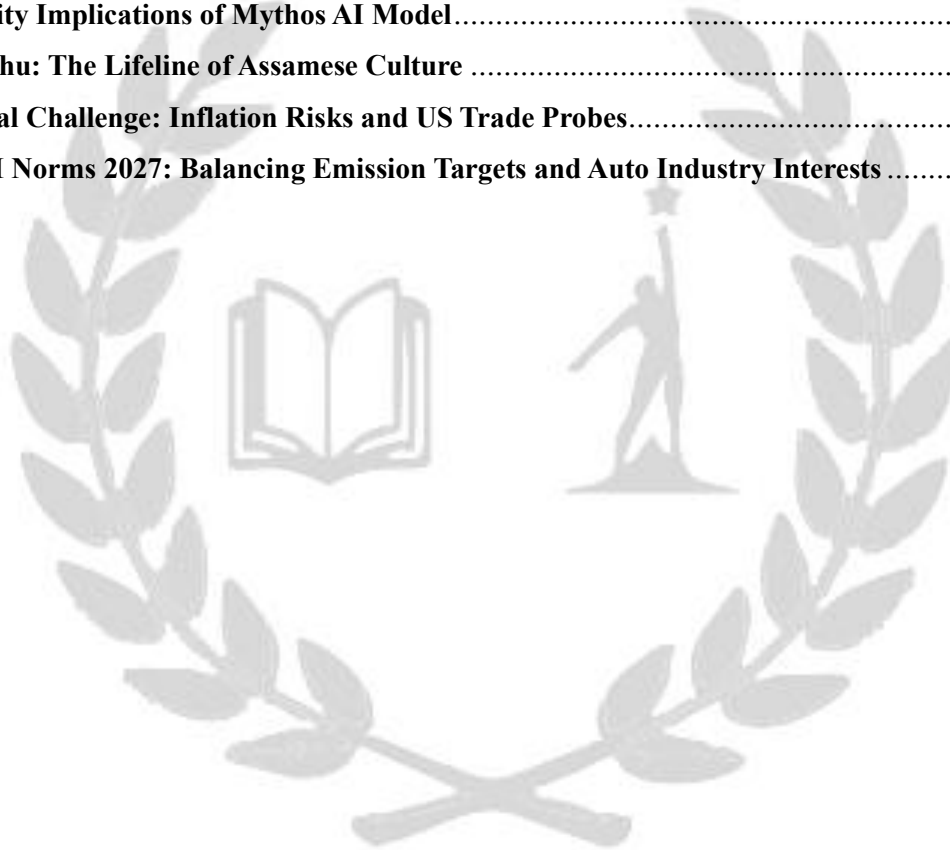
**9972258970 & 9740702455**

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



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VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



## 1. Delimitation and Women’s Reservation: Impact on Southern States

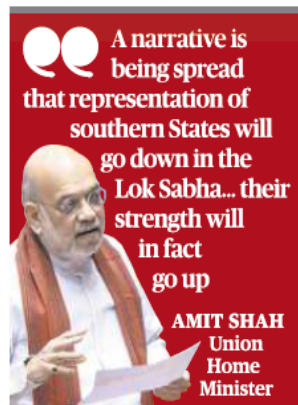
- **Maintenance of Proportional Representation:** The Union government has clarified that the upcoming delimitation exercise, post-2026, will not reduce the relative political weight of Southern States; instead, it aims to increase the absolute number of seats while keeping the current ratios between states intact.
- **Seat Augmentation Strategy:** Projections indicate that the total Lok Sabha seats will rise to 816, with the five Southern States (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana) seeing their combined representation increase from 129 to approximately 195 seats.
- **Legislative Trifecta:** The transition is driven by three key pieces of legislation: the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 (Women’s Reservation), the Delimitation Bill, 2026, and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026.
- **Addressing Federal Concerns:** The official stance seeks to dispel "misconceptions" that states with successful population control measures would be penalized with fewer parliamentary seats, ensuring that Tamil Nadu and its neighbors see a net increase in political "power."
- **Implementation Timeline:** The delimitation process is intrinsically linked to the implementation of the 33% women’s reservation, which is slated to be operational by the 2029 Lok Sabha polls.
- **Constitutional Safeguards:** The government intends to use a specific mathematical interpretation during the readjustment of constituencies to ensure that the North-South political balance remains stable despite varying population growth rates.

### Key Definitions

- **Delimitation:** The act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats to represent changes in population over time, ensuring the principle of "One Vote, One Value."
- **Proportional Representation:** In this context, it refers to maintaining the existing ratio of seats between different states relative to the total strength of the House.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 82:** Empowers Parliament to enact a Delimitation Act after every Census. Once the Act is in force, the Central Government constitutes a Delimitation Commission.
- **Article 81:** Defines the composition of the Lok Sabha. The 84th Amendment (2001) froze the number of seats based on the 1971 Census until the first census after 2026.



### Proposed figures

The table shows the estimated number of seats for southern States as announced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah

State	Current seats	As a share of current 543 seats	50% increase (approx.)	New status (as a share of 816 seats)
Karnataka	28	5.15%	42	5.14%
Andhra Pradesh	25	4.60%	38	4.65%
Telangana	17	3.13%	26	3.18%
Tamil Nadu	39	7.18%	59	7.23%
Kerala	20	3.68%	30	3.67%
Total	129	23.76%	195	23.87%

- **131st Amendment Bill (2026):** Seeks to enable the 33% quota for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, contingent upon the completion of the delimitation exercise.
- **Delimitation Commission:** A high-power body whose orders have the force of law and cannot be called into question before any court.



### Additional Key Points

- **The 1971 Benchmark:** Historically, seats were frozen at 1971 levels to encourage states to implement family planning without fearing a loss of political representation.
- **The "South vs North" Debate:** Southern states have grown at a slower rate (approx. 1% to 1.5% annually) compared to Northern states (over 2% in some regions), leading to fears that a purely population-based delimitation would shift the center of power Northward.
- **Infrastructure Readiness:** The new Parliament building was specifically designed with a larger seating capacity (888 for Lok Sabha) to accommodate the anticipated increase post-delimitation.

### Conclusion

The government's assurance represents a significant pivot toward "Fiscal and Political Federalism," attempting to balance the constitutional necessity of population-based representation with the equitable demand of reward for social development. By proposing a 50% increase in seat counts while maintaining proportional parity, the move aims to mitigate the "population penalty" and ensure national integration during a period of major electoral reform.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Issues related to federalism, the structure and functioning of Parliament, and the significance of constitutional amendments.
- **GS Paper I (Social Issues):** Population dynamics and the socio-political implications of demographic transitions.

## 2. State of India's Bats Report 2024-25: Conservation and Challenges

- **First National Assessment:** The "State of India's Bats 2024-25" report, compiled by 36 experts from 27 institutions, marks the first-ever comprehensive scientific evaluation of the 135 bat species found across India.
- **Threat Profile:** Indian bat species are facing severe pressure from rapid urbanization, deforestation, land-use changes, climate impacts, and mining activities, particularly in hotspots like the Western Ghats and Northeast India.
- **Conservation Status:** Out of 135 species, 16 are endemic to India and 7 are listed under the "Threatened" category by the IUCN; however, "data deficiency" remains a critical hurdle for 35 other species.
- **Ecosystem Services:** Bats are vital ecological actors that provide essential services such as pollination, seed dispersal, pest control for agriculture, and soil nutrient enrichment through guano (droppings).
- **Zoonotic Risks and Stigma:** Post-Covid-19, bats have suffered from increased social stigma as disease carriers; the report emphasizes the need for pathogen surveillance in the Northeast and Western Ghats to prevent future zoonotic spillovers.
- **Research and Policy Gaps:** Bureaucratic hurdles in obtaining research permits and a lack of inter-agency cooperation (beyond the Forest Department) are hindering the study of bat ecology and the impacts of environmental pollution.



## Key Definitions

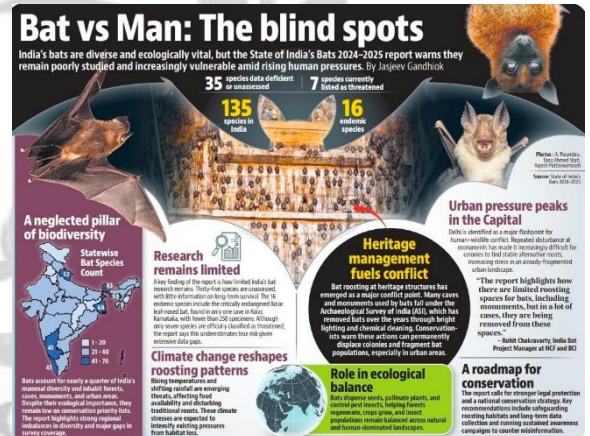
- **Endemic Species:** Species that are native to a specific geographic area and are not found naturally anywhere else in the world.
- **Zoonotic Spillover:** The transmission of a pathogen from a vertebrate animal to a human, often facilitated by environmental degradation or close contact.
- **Ecosystem Services:** The manifold benefits that a natural environment and healthy ecosystems provide to humans, such as clean water, pollination of crops, and climate regulation.

## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duties):** It is the duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** While many flagship species are protected under various schedules, many bat species were historically classified as "vermin" under Schedule V. Recent amendments (2022) have restructured these schedules, necessitating a review of the protection status for specific bat species like the Khasian Leaf-nosed bat.
- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002:** Provides for the conservation of biological diversity and sustainable use of its components, relevant for protecting bat-heavy biodiversity hotspots.

## Additional Key Points

- **The "Data Dark Spot":** The report highlights that 35 species lack sufficient data for IUCN classification, meaning their extinction risk might be higher than currently recorded.
- **Persecution-fueled Hunting:** In regions like Meghalaya, certain species face direct threats from hunting and habitat loss due to unregulated mining.
- **Conflict with Green Energy:** Emerging threats include renewable energy infrastructure (such as wind turbines), which can lead to bat fatalities if not properly planned.



## Conclusion

The "State of India's Bats" report serves as a wake-up call to move beyond "charismatic megafauna" (like tigers and elephants) toward a more holistic conservation approach. Protecting bats is not merely a matter of wildlife preservation but a necessity for food security and public health. Addressing the research-policy gap and reducing the stigma associated with bats are essential steps in maintaining the delicate ecological balance of India's biodiversity hotspots.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Environment & Biodiversity):** Conservation of species, environmental degradation, and the role of bats in the ecosystem.



- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Policy hurdles in scientific research and inter-agency coordination for environmental protection.

### 3. Uniform Civil Code (UCC): A Constitutional Ambition Beyond Religion

- **Judicial Affirmation:** The Supreme Court of India, led by Chief Justice Surya Kant, has characterized the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) as a "constitutional ambition" rather than a religious issue, emphasizing that civil laws should ideally be uniform for all citizens irrespective of their faith.
- **Challenge to Shariat Law:** The observations came during a notice issued on a plea challenging the application of Shariat law specifically in matters concerning inheritance and testamentary succession, labeling such practices as potentially discriminatory.
- **Essential Religious Practice (ERP) Doctrine:** The court discussed the limits of religious freedom, noting that practices that are inherently discriminatory or against equity, public order, and morality cannot claim protection under Article 25 if they are not "essential" to the religion.
- **Incremental Uniformity:** The bench highlighted existing laws like the Special Marriage Act and the Juvenile Justice Act (permitting adoption) as successful "inroads" into the personal law domain, proving that secular civil laws can coexist with religious identities.
- **Gender Justice and Equity:** A primary argument presented was that inheritance laws providing women with significantly less share than men (e.g., half or less) are discriminatory civil matters rather than protected religious practices.
- **Decoupling UCC from Majority Hegemony:** To address minority apprehensions, the discourse focused on the principle that a UCC is not the imposition of one religion's code on another, but the creation of a uniform secular standard for civil rights.

#### Key Definitions

- **Uniform Civil Code (UCC):** A proposed common set of laws governing personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption for all citizens, replacing diverse personal laws based on religious scriptures and customs.
- **Testamentary Succession:** The legal process of distributing a deceased person's property according to the instructions laid out in their "Will" or testament.
- **Equity and Good Conscience:** A legal principle used by courts to provide justice in cases where existing laws may be silent, outdated, or result in unfair outcomes.



#### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 44 (DPSP):** Explicitly directs the State to "endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India."
- **Article 25:** Guarantees freedom of conscience and the right to profess, practice, and propagate religion, subject to public order, morality, and health.
- **Article 14 & 15:** Guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.



- **The Special Marriage Act, 1954:** A secular law that provides a legal form of marriage for any citizen, regardless of religion, and governs their subsequent succession rights under the Indian Succession Act.
- **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act:** A secular law that allows for adoption by any person irrespective of their religious personal law (which might otherwise prohibit it).

### Additional Key Points

- **The Gender Parity Argument:** Proponents argue that personal laws often disadvantage women in matters of maintenance and property; hence, a UCC is a tool for women's empowerment.
- **National Integration:** A common code is envisioned to remove disparate loyalties based on religious laws and promote a sense of national identity.
- **Judicial Precedents:** The SC has previously nudged the government toward a UCC in landmark cases such as *Shah Bano (1985)*, *Sarla Mudgal (1995)*, and *Shayar Bano (2017)* regarding Triple Talaq.

### Conclusion

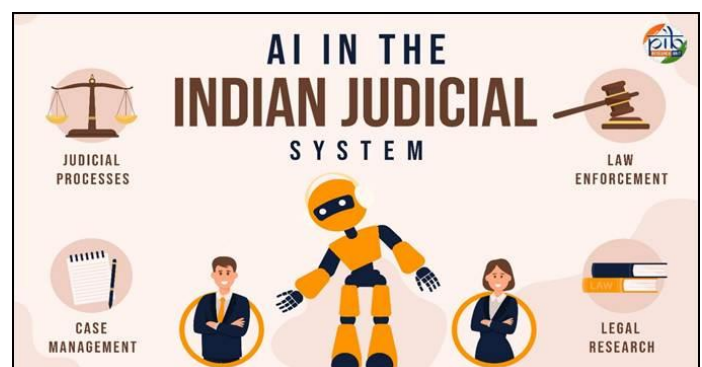
The Supreme Court's recent stance reinforces the idea that personal laws are not immune to the touchstone of "Constitutional Morality." By defining the UCC as a constitutional ambition, the judiciary is shifting the debate from a communal narrative to one of civil rights and gender justice. The focus on inheritance laws highlights that while religious rituals may be protected, secular consequences like property distribution must align with the constitutional mandate of equality.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Indian Polity):** Significant for topics related to the Indian Constitution, Features, Significant Provisions, and Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP).
- **GS Paper I (Social Issues):** Relevant to secularism, communalism, and women's issues within the Indian social fabric.

## 4. Judicial Reforms: Reimagining Justice Delivery in India

- **The Crisis of Pendency:** With over 5 crore cases currently clogging the judicial system, the "backlog" has become a systemic failure where the legal process itself acts as a punishment, exhausting the resources and dignity of the common citizen.
- **Human Rights and Under-trials:** The prolonged incarceration of individuals under stringent laws like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) without trial highlights a fundamental crisis; there is an urgent need for mandatory timelines (1-2 years) for trial commencement or bail.
- **Technological Integration:** Transitioning from colonial-era physical documentation to a digital-first judiciary is essential, utilizing Artificial Intelligence (AI) for administrative filing, case management, and legal research to free up judicial bandwidth.
- **Inclusive Representation:** The "social contract" between the people and the courts depends on a diverse Bench; breaking the





"old boys' club" culture to include more women and marginalized communities is vital for nuanced and empathetic rulings.

- **Accessibility and Affordability:** High litigation costs and geographical centralization of the Supreme Court in Delhi make justice a "luxury good"; the solution lies in high-caliber legal aid and the establishment of Regional Benches or virtual courts.
- **Accountability and Independence:** True reform requires a balance between judicial independence and public accountability, achieved through live-streaming of proceedings and transparent criteria for judicial appointments.

### Key Definitions

- **Pendency:** Refers to the total number of cases currently awaiting a final decision or resolution in a court of law.
- **Adjournment:** The postponement of a court hearing to another date, which, when used frequently or frivolously, contributes significantly to judicial delays.
- **Constitutional Morality:** A principle where the government and the judiciary adhere to the core values of the Constitution (justice, liberty, equality) rather than just the literal text.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The Right to Life and Personal Liberty includes the right to a "Speedy Trial," as established by the Supreme Court in the *Hussainara Khatoon* case.
- **Article 39A:** Mandates the State to provide free legal aid to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.
- **Article 130:** Grants the Chief Justice of India the power, with the approval of the President, to appoint other places as seats for the Supreme Court (supporting the argument for Regional Benches).
- **UAPA (1967):** An anti-terror law where the stringent bail provisions (Section 43D(5)) often lead to long-term incarceration of accused individuals without a proven prima facie case.

### Additional Key Points

- **The "Viksit Bharat" Goal:** For India to become a developed nation by 2047, the legal system must transform from an "adversarial" culture to a "resolution-oriented" culture.
- **Administrative Burden:** A significant portion of a judge's time is spent on clerical tasks that could be automated, highlighting the need for specialized "Court Managers."
- **Victim Compensation:** The current system often acquits people after decades without any state mechanism to compensate them for lost years and social stigma.

### Conclusion

Judicial reform in India must move beyond incremental changes and be treated as a national emergency. A system that prioritizes the citizen over the gavel—by embracing AI, ensuring diversity, and enforcing strict timelines—is the only way to ensure the law remains a shield for the weak rather than a tool for the powerful.



## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Crucial for topics on "Structure, Organization, and Functioning of the Judiciary," "Issues Arising out of Design and Implementation of Policies," and "Judicial Activism vs. Judicial Restraint."
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Relevant for discussing "Ethical concerns in public administration" and the concept of "Justice" as a foundational value.

## 5. Meghalaya's Linguistic Landmark: Khasi and Garo as Official Languages

- **Historic Recognition:** The Meghalaya Cabinet has approved the **Meghalaya Official Languages Ordinance, 2026**, officially designating **Khasi and Garo** as official languages of the state alongside English.
- **Repeal of Previous Legislation:** This ordinance repeals the outdated **Meghalaya State Language Act, 2005**, which primarily recognized English as the official language, thereby ending a long period of indigenous linguistic marginalization in governance.
- **Broadening Administrative Use:** The decision facilitates the use of these native languages in government communications, gazette notifications, and official orders, ensuring that the state's largest tribal communities can interact with the administration in their mother tongues.
- **Legislative and Academic Impact:** Amendments are planned for the **Meghalaya State Legislature (Continuance of English Language) Act, 1980**, allowing legislators to debate in Khasi and Garo. Furthermore, these languages will be integrated into state-level competitive examinations.
- **Strategic Step for Eighth Schedule:** By granting official status at the state level, the government aims to strengthen its long-standing case for the inclusion of Khasi and Garo in the **Eighth Schedule** of the Indian Constitution, signaling their readiness for national recognition.
- **Phased Implementation:** Chief Minister Conrad Sangma clarified that while the decision is immediate, full implementation—including logistical setups, manpower, and infrastructure for translation—will be carried out in a phased manner.



## Key Definitions

- **Official Language:** A language given a unique legal status in a state or country, typically used in the legislative, judicial, and administrative branches of government.
- **Eighth Schedule:** A list in the Indian Constitution that recognizes 22 official regional languages of India, providing them with protection and promotion by the Union government.
- **Ordinance:** An executive order issued by the Governor (at the state level) when the legislature is not in session, having the same force and effect as an Act of Parliament/Legislature.

## Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 345:** Empowers the Legislature of a State to adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the State or Hindi as the language(s) to be used for all or any of the official purposes of that State.



- **Article 347:** Provides for the President to direct a state to recognize a language spoken by a substantial proportion of its population if the people desire it.
- **Article 351:** Directs the Union to promote the spread of the Hindi language and to secure its enrichment by assimilating the forms, style, and expressions of languages listed in the Eighth Schedule.
- **The Meghalaya State Legislature (Continuance of English Language) Act, 1980:** An existing law that previously restricted official legislative debate primarily to English, now set for amendment.

### Additional Key Points

- **Tribal Identity:** Khasi and Garo are the languages of the two largest matrilineal tribal communities in Meghalaya; their official recognition is seen as a victory for preserving indigenous cultural identity.
- **Economic Opportunities:** The inclusion of these languages in official exams is expected to remove linguistic barriers for rural youth, potentially improving their participation in state services.
- **Center-State Dynamics:** The resolution sends a strong message to the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding the long-pending demand for Eighth Schedule status, which currently lacks fixed criteria for inclusion.

### Conclusion

The passage of the 2026 Ordinance marks a paradigm shift from a colonial linguistic legacy toward a more inclusive, "people-centric" governance model. By elevating Khasi and Garo, Meghalaya is not only preserving its unique heritage but also asserting its right to linguistic self-determination within the Indian federal structure. This move bridges the gap between the tribal populace and the administrative machinery, fulfilling a core demand of the state's socio-political movements.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Federalism, linguistic diversity, and constitutional provisions related to official languages (Articles 343-351).
- **GS Paper I (Society):** Preservation of indigenous cultures, tribal identity, and linguistic movements in Northeast India.
- **Preliminary Examination:** Knowledge of the Eighth Schedule, Article 345, and the 2026 Ordinance as a current event in the context of state-level legislative reforms.

## 6. India's Defence Against USTR Probe: Forced Labour and Trade Surplus

- **Response to Section 301 Investigations:** India has formally countered two "Section 301" investigations launched by the United States Trade Representative (USTR) regarding "structural excess capacity" and "forced labour," asserting that its legal framework is fully aligned with international standards.
- **Adherence to ILO Standards:** The Indian government emphasized that it has ratified key International Labour Organisation (ILO) treaties on forced labour, ensuring that its manufacturing and export sectors operate under globally recognized humanitarian and legal benchmarks.
- **Macroeconomic Defense:** Addressing US concerns over trade imbalances, India argued that a bilateral trade surplus is a natural macroeconomic consequence of generalized economic conditions and domestic demand-driven growth rather than unfair trade practices.



- **Low Export Intensity:** To dispel "overcapacity" charges, India highlighted its modest merchandise export-to-GDP ratio of approximately 12%, proving that production is primarily oriented toward meeting the vast domestic market rather than flooding global markets.
- **Limited Impact on US Deficit:** Indian negotiators pointed out that Indian goods account for only 3.1% of total US imports, suggesting that India's role in the widening US trade deficit is minimal compared to other major trading partners.
- **Challenge to Comparative Advantage:** India criticized the USTR's focus as a challenge to the "foundational principles of comparative advantage" that underpin international commerce, arguing that trade surpluses in specific sectors do not equate to structural excess.



### Key Definitions

- **Section 301 Investigation:** A provision under the US Trade Act of 1974 that allows the US President to take all appropriate action, including retaliation, to obtain the removal of any act, policy, or practice of a foreign government that violates an international trade agreement or is "unreasonable or discriminatory."
- **Structural Excess Capacity:** A situation where a country's production ability in certain industries significantly exceeds both domestic demand and sustainable global demand, often fueled by state subsidies.
- **Forced Labour (ILO Definition):** All work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 23:** Prohibits traffic in human beings and "begar" (forced labour) and other similar forms of forced labour, making any contravention a punishable offense.
- **ILO Convention No. 29 (Forced Labour):** Ratified by India; requires the suppression of forced or compulsory labour in all its forms.
- **ILO Convention No. 105 (Abolition of Forced Labour):** Ratified by India; prohibits forced labour as a means of political coercion or as a punishment for holding political views.
- **The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976:** Indian legislation enacted to give effect to Article 23, providing for the abolition of bonded labour and the rehabilitation of freed labourers.

### Additional Key Points

- **Trade Negotiations:** Indian negotiators are scheduled to meet US officials in Washington to further discuss these probes, aiming to stabilize trade relations following the legal invalidation of certain reciprocal tariffs by the US Supreme Court.
- **Geopolitical Context:** The probes come amid a shifting US trade policy that emphasizes re-shoring supply chains and protecting domestic "good-paying jobs" for American workers.
- **Sectoral Focus:** India contends that the USTR is selectively targeting sectors where India holds a competitive advantage, ignoring the broader context of India's development needs and import profile.



## Conclusion

India's robust rebuttal to the USTR investigations serves to protect its sovereign economic interests and manufacturing reputation on the global stage. By linking its trade surplus to domestic demand and its labour practices to constitutional and international mandates, India seeks to shift the narrative from "unfair competition" to "legitimate comparative advantage." The upcoming talks in Washington will be pivotal in determining whether trade friction or cooperation will define the next phase of India-US bilateral relations.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III (Indian Economy):** Mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System; Technology missions.

## 7. Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM)

- **Multidimensional Poverty Alleviation:** The mission adopts a holistic approach to eliminate rural poverty by enabling households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities, resulting in appreciable improvement in their livelihoods on a sustainable basis.
- **Social Mobilization and Institutional Building:**  
At its core, the NRLM focuses on mobilizing rural poor women into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and their federations (Village Organizations and Cluster Level Federations), creating a robust community-managed institutional architecture.
- **Financial Inclusion and Capitalization:** By providing Revolving Funds (RF) and Community Investment Funds (CIF), the mission bridges the gap between the informal and formal financial sectors, facilitating bank linkages that have reached over ₹12 lakh crore in credit.
- **Empowerment through Cadres:** The program leverages "Community Resource Persons" (CRPs) and "Bank Sakhis" (women banking correspondents) to deliver last-mile services, ensuring financial literacy and discipline while enhancing female labor force participation.
- **Global South Collaboration:** The NRLM has emerged as a blueprint for "Development Diplomacy," with African nations like Ethiopia and Kenya adopting the SHG-based framework, marking a shift from resource-based aid to knowledge-based institutional export.
- **Economic Impact and Scale:** As of 2025-26, the mission has mobilized over 100 million households across 742 districts, with a significant cohort of "Lakhpati Didis" (women earning over ₹1,00,000 annually) driving the rural economy.





## Key Definitions

- **Multidimensional Poverty:** An assessment of poverty that goes beyond income to include deprivations in health, education, and living standards.
- **Self-Help Groups (SHGs):** Small voluntary associations of rural poor, primarily women, who come together to save regularly and provide mutual financial support.
- **Capitalization Support:** Initial financial grants provided by the government to SHGs to strengthen their corpus and catalyze internal lending.
- **South-South Cooperation:** The exchange of resources, technology, and knowledge between developing countries in the Global South.

## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 38 (DPSP):** Mandates the State to promote the welfare of people by securing a social order characterized by justice and minimizing inequalities in income and status.
- **Article 41 (DPSP):** Directs the State to ensure the right to work and public assistance in cases of unemployment and underserved want.
- **Article 243-G (11th Schedule):** Empowers Panchayats to implement schemes for economic development and social justice, including poverty alleviation and rural housing.

## Additional Key Points

- **Budgetary Support:** The Union Budget 2026-27 allocated ₹19,200 crore, reflecting the mission's status as a flagship poverty reduction tool.
- **Livelihood Diversification:** Beyond credit, the mission promotes "Farm and Non-Farm" interventions, focusing on value chain development and micro-enterprises.
- **Institutional Portability:** The model's success in Africa is attributed to its low capital intensity and reliance on community-driven processes rather than top-down bureaucracy.

## Conclusion

The evolution of DAY-NRLM from a domestic poverty alleviation scheme to a global model of institutional excellence signifies India's growing "Soft Power." By fostering financial agency among 100 million women, the mission has not only transformed the rural landscape but also provided a cost-effective, scalable template for the Global South. The proposed "Rural Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Platform" could further solidify India's role as a leader in development diplomacy, proving that grassroots social mobilization is the most sustainable path to economic resilience.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; Issues relating to poverty and hunger; Important aspects of governance (transparency and accountability).
- **GS Paper III:** Inclusive growth and issues arising from it; Rural development; Role of SHGs in the economy.
- **International Relations:** India's role in South-South cooperation and its development partnership with Africa.



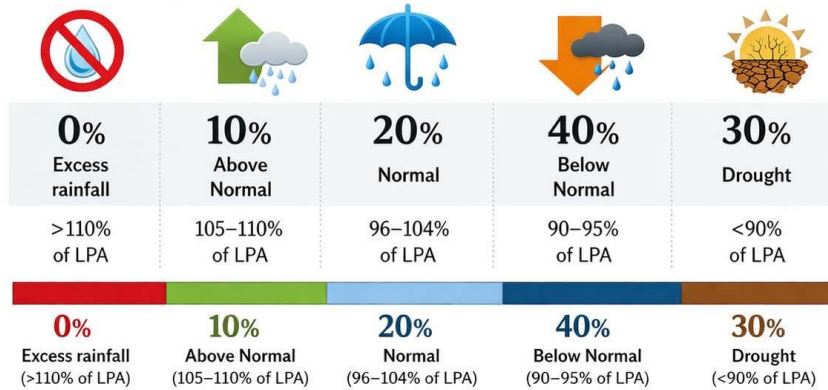
## 8. India's 2026 Monsoon Forecast: Resilience Amidst Deficit

- **IMD Forecast 2026:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has projected a "below normal" monsoon for 2026, estimating rainfall at 92% of the Long Period Average (LPA), marking the lowest forecast in two decades.
- **El Niño Factor:** The primary driver for this suppressed rainfall is the El Niño phenomenon in the eastern Pacific Ocean, which is expected to peak around July, typically leading to weaker monsoon winds and drier conditions over the Indian subcontinent.
- **Temporal Distribution:** While rainfall is expected to remain normal during the first half of the season (June and July), the second half (August and September) is likely to see a significant dip, impacting late-kharif sowing and soil moisture for rabi crops.

### Skymet forecasts below-normal monsoon for India in 2026

Probability distribution, June to September

**Below-normal Monsoon** forecast at **94%** of LPA



Skymet Weather projects the 2026 southwest monsoon at 94% (±5%) of the long period average (LPA) of 868.6 mm for the June–September period, indicating below-normal rainfall.

The forecast implies a 40% chance of below-normal rainfall and a 30% chance of drought.

Source: Skymet Weather, 2026

- **Enhanced Reservoir Levels:** Despite the dry forecast, India's 166 major reservoirs hold approximately 82.070 BCM (Billion Cubic Metres) of water—significantly higher than the 10-year average—providing a crucial buffer for irrigation and drinking water.
- **Structural Resilience:** Successive years of groundwater conservation, river-cleaning exercises, and the creation of decentralized water assets under the flagship rural employment guarantee scheme (MGNREGA) have reduced the agricultural sector's vulnerability to single-year rainfall shocks.
- **Forecast Accuracy:** The IMD has moved toward more granular and timely forecasts over the last decade, allowing policy planners to implement localized water management strategies and assist farmers in choosing drought-resistant crop varieties.

### Key Definitions

- **Long Period Average (LPA):** The average rainfall recorded over a particular region for a long period (usually 30 or 50 years). A forecast of 92% falls under the "below normal" category (90% to 96% of LPA).
- **El Niño:** A climate pattern describing the unusual warming of surface waters in the central and eastern Pacific Ocean, which disrupts global weather patterns and often weakens the Indian Monsoon.



- **Kharif and Rabi Crops:** Kharif crops (e.g., rice, maize) are sown with the onset of the monsoon (June-July), while Rabi crops (e.g., wheat, mustard) are sown in winter (October-November) relying on residual soil moisture and irrigation.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A:** Directs the State to endeavor to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife, which includes the sustainable management of water resources.
- **Entry 17 (State List) & Entry 56 (Union List):** Water is primarily a State subject, but the Union has the power to regulate and develop inter-state rivers and river valleys.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Provides the legal framework for drought management, where the IMD's forecasts act as the primary trigger for the National and State Disaster Response Forces to prepare for agricultural distress.

### Additional Key Points

- **Economic Impact:** Nearly 50% of India's cropland remains rainfed; hence, monsoon performance directly influences rural demand, food inflation (CPI), and overall GDP growth.
- **Non-Uniform Impact:** The 92% rainfall will not be uniform; regional variations indicate that while most of the country faces a deficit, parts of the North-East and Southern Peninsula might still receive normal or above-normal rain.
- **Strategic Buffer:** The "surplus" storage in reservoirs is a direct result of bountiful rains in 2024 and 2025, emphasizing the importance of multi-year water planning.

### Conclusion

While a "below normal" monsoon after seven years of good rainfall poses a challenge, India's improved hydrological infrastructure and more accurate meteorological data offer a strong safety net. The shift from "alarm" to "preparedness" reflects a maturing economy that is slowly decoupling its immediate survival from the vagaries of weather through better water governance and technological intervention.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I (Geography):** Important Geophysical phenomena such as El Niño, Monsoon dynamics, and their impact on the Indian subcontinent.
- **GS Paper III (Economy & Agriculture):** Cropping patterns, irrigation systems, and the impact of weather on food security and inflation.
- **GS Paper III (Environment):** Climate change adaptation, water conservation initiatives, and disaster management related to droughts and floods.

## 9. Cybersecurity Implications of Mythos AI Model

- **Emergence of Autonomous Vulnerability Discovery:** Anthropic's Mythos model represents a paradigm shift from "agentic" AI (requiring human prompts) to autonomous systems capable of identifying bugs, triaging them, and developing "zero-day" exploits independently.
- **Paradigm Shift in Zero-Day Economics:** The democratization of Mythos-class models is expected to crash the market price of zero-day vulnerabilities, as the cost of identifying unknown software flaws drops significantly, making sophisticated hacking tools more accessible.



- **The "Execution" Bottleneck vs. Discovery:** While AI accelerates the identification of vulnerabilities, experts highlight that the primary challenge for the Indian IT sector and global enterprises remains the "execution" of patches, particularly for known (N-day) vulnerabilities that often remain unaddressed.
- **Impact on Cybersecurity Professionals:** The rise of autonomous AI will likely commoditize lower-level, repetitive tasks such as basic bug hunting and reverse engineering, shifting the professional focus toward high-level prioritization, business impact validation, and defending complex environments at scale.
- **National Security and "Project Glasswing":** Anthropic's decision to restrict Mythos to critical software firms under Project Glasswing underscores the dual-use nature of AI; while it serves as a defensive shield, its potential as a state-sponsored weapon necessitates urgent regulatory study by bodies like CERT-In.
- **Evolving Threat Landscape for State-Sponsored Actors:** Sophisticated offensive outfits may face shorter "shelf lives" for their exclusive exploits as AI defenders get faster at patching, forcing a shift in tactics toward chaining multiple vulnerabilities and exploiting misconfigurations in weak environments.



### Key Definitions

- **Zero-Day Exploit:** A cyberattack targeting a software vulnerability that is unknown to the software developer and has no existing patch.
- **Triage:** The process of prioritizing vulnerabilities based on their severity and the potential impact on the system.
- **Agentic AI:** AI systems designed to use tools and take multi-step actions to achieve a specific goal, typically under human supervision.
- **N-Day Vulnerability:** A vulnerability that has been publicly disclosed and for which a patch is usually available, but which remains unpatched on certain systems.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21 (Right to Privacy):** Interpreted by the Supreme Court in the *Puttaswamy* judgment, this right necessitates robust cybersecurity frameworks to protect citizen data from autonomous AI threats.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000 (Section 70):** Provides the legal framework for "Protected Systems" and empowers the government to declare critical information infrastructure.
- **The Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023:** Imposes obligations on "Data Fiduciaries" to maintain effective security safeguards, a task increasingly complicated by AI-driven exploits.
- **National Cyber Security Policy (2013):** The primary policy framework aimed at protecting public and private infrastructure, currently being updated to address emerging AI challenges.



### Additional Key Points

- **Bug Bounty Disruption:** Indian researchers, who are leading global contributors to bug bounty programs, may see a shift in value from "finding" bugs to "contextualizing" them within specific business environments.
- **Open Source Proliferation:** Small open-source AI models are already showing capabilities similar to Mythos, suggesting that "security through obscurity" is no longer a viable defense strategy.
- **India's Strategic Response:** The Union government and cybersecurity agencies are actively studying Mythos to balance the benefits of AI-assisted defense with the risks of AI-automated offense.

### Conclusion

The Mythos AI model signifies the end of the traditional manual era of cybersecurity. While it offers a "wake-up call" to accelerate defensive mechanisms and automated patching, it simultaneously lowers the barrier to entry for malicious actors. For a digital-first economy like India, the focus must shift from mere "discovery" of flaws to building resilient, AI-augmented defense systems that can patch and protect at the speed of the threat.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security; Challenges to internal security through communication networks; Role of media and social networking sites in network security; Basics of cybersecurity.
- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology; Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, and Robotics (AI).

## 10. Rongali Bihu: The Lifeline of Assamese Culture

- **Significance of the New Year:** Rongali Bihu, also known as Bohag Bihu, marks the beginning of the Assamese New Year (typically mid-April) and the onset of the spring season. It is the most celebrated of the three Bihus, signifying joy (Rong) and the start of the agricultural cycle.
- **Agricultural Connection:** The festival coincides with the sowing of seeds and reflects the agrarian lifestyle of the Brahmaputra Valley. It is an occasion to thank nature and seek blessings for a bountiful harvest.
- **The Bihu Dance:** A core cultural element, the Bihu dance is a folk form characterized by brisk steps, rapid hand movements, and rhythmic swaying. Traditionally performed by young men and women in groups, it symbolizes fertility and youthful vigor.
- **Traditional Attire and Symbols:** Performers wear exquisite "Muga" or "Pat" silk garments—women in Mekhela Chador and men in Dhoti and Gamocha. The "Gamocha" (traditional towel) is not just a garment but a symbol of respect and affection exchanged during the festival.
- **Musical Instruments:** The dance is accompanied by indigenous instruments such as the "Dhol" (drum), "Pepa" (hornpipe made of buffalo horn), "Gogona" (jaw harp), "Toka" (bamboo clapper), and "Xutuli" (clay whistle).





- **Social Cohesion:** Bihu transcends religious and ethnic barriers, bringing together various communities like the Misings, Bodos, and Kacharis, thereby acting as a powerful tool for social harmony and collective Assamese identity.

### Key Definitions

- **Bohag Bihu:** The spring festival marking the New Year; "Bohag" is the first month of the Assamese calendar.
- **Mekhela Chador:** The traditional two-piece silk attire worn by Assamese women, often featuring intricate hand-woven motifs.
- **Gamocha:** A white rectangular piece of cloth with red borders; it was recently granted a Geographical Indication (GI) tag, signifying its unique cultural origin.
- **Lakhpati Didi:** A term often linked in modern rural contexts (NRLM) to women achieving economic independence, which parallels the empowerment seen during community-led Bihu celebrations.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 29:** Grants any section of citizens residing in India the right to conserve their distinct language, script, or culture, providing a constitutional shield to Assamese traditions.
- **Sixth Schedule:** Provides for the administration of tribal areas in Assam (among other states) to protect the social and cultural customs of indigenous communities.
- **Clause 6 of the Assam Accord (1985):** Mandates constitutional, legislative, and administrative safeguards to protect, preserve, and promote the cultural, social, and linguistic identity of the Assamese people.
- **Assam Official Language Act, 1960:** Recognizes Assamese as the official language of the state, ensuring the survival of the linguistic medium through which Bihu songs and folklore are preserved.

### Additional Key Points

- **The Seven Days of Rongali Bihu:** The festival is often celebrated over seven days (Haat Bihu), with specific rituals for cattle (Goru Bihu), humans (Manuh Bihu), and deities (Gosai Bihu).
- **GI Tag Significance:** The Assamese Gamocha and Muga Silk have received GI tags, which aids in protecting the intellectual property of local weavers and ensuring the authenticity of Bihu attire.
- **Historical Endorsement:** While its origins are ancient, historical records show that Ahom King Rudra Singha invited Bihu dancers to perform at the Rang Ghar fields in the late 17th century, giving it royal patronage.

### Conclusion

Rongali Bihu is far more than a seasonal festival; it is the rhythmic heartbeat of Assam that weaves together the state's diverse ethnic tapestry. By blending agricultural rituals with artistic expression, it ensures the continuity of an ancient heritage in a modernizing world. As a symbol of resilience and unity, Bihu remains a cornerstone of India's intangible cultural heritage, reflecting the profound link between human society and the natural environment.

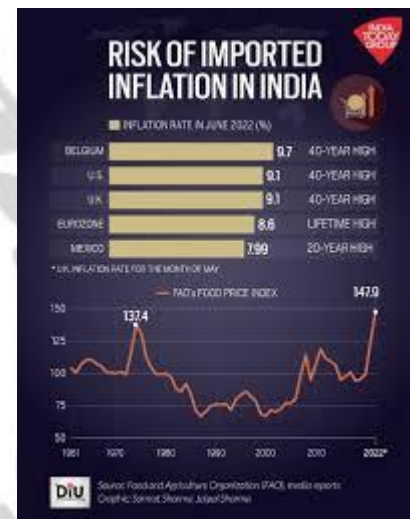


## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Indian Culture - Salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature, and Architecture; Folk dances and festivals of North-East India.
- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory, and various quasi-judicial bodies; Protection of interests of minorities (Art 29/30).

## 11. India's Dual Challenge: Inflation Risks and US Trade Probes

- **Monsoon and Inflation Nexus:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a "below normal" monsoon at 92% of the Long Period Average (LPA) for 2026, creating a significant upside risk to food inflation, which the RBI already projects to average 4.6% in 2026-27.
- **Geopolitical Inflation Multiplier:** Current retail inflation (3.4%) and wholesale inflation (3.88%) are under pressure due to the Iran-Israel conflict, which has hiked energy and petroleum prices; a weak monsoon could further exacerbate this by driving up food costs, potentially pushing CPI beyond 6% if Brent crude hits \$100 per barrel.
- **Rebutting US Trade Probes:** India has formally rejected two "Section 301" investigations by the USTR concerning "structural excess capacity" and "forced labour," arguing that its export-to-GDP ratio (12%) is domestic demand-driven and its legal framework fully aligns with ILO standards.
- **Trade Surplus Defense:** New Delhi asserts that its trade surplus with the US is a macroeconomic byproduct of comparative advantage and generalized economic conditions rather than "unreasonable or discriminatory" state policies that burden US commerce.
- **Agricultural Resilience:** While El Niño poses a threat, high reservoir levels (44.7% of capacity, 18% higher than last year) and a potential positive Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) later in the season may provide a crucial buffer for the kharif and rabi crop cycles.
- **Diplomatic Strategy:** India is calling for the termination of unilateral US trade probes, urging that any trade friction be resolved through the ongoing negotiations for a Bilateral Trade Agreement rather than retaliatory tariffs.



## Key Definitions

- **Section 301 Investigation:** A US legal tool under the Trade Act of 1974 used to investigate and retaliate against foreign trade practices deemed unfair or restrictive to US commerce.
- **Structural Excess Capacity:** When a country's industrial production capacity significantly exceeds its domestic demand, potentially leading to "dumping" in global markets.
- **Long Period Average (LPA):** The average rainfall recorded over a 50-year period, used as a benchmark to classify monsoon performance (e.g., "below normal" is 90-96% of LPA).

## Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 23:** Prohibits forced labour ("begar") and human trafficking, serving as the constitutional basis for India's rebuttal to US forced labour allegations.



- **The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976:** The primary legislation implementing Article 23, ensuring legal recourse against coercive labour practices.
- **ILO Conventions 29 & 105:** International treaties ratified by India that mandate the abolition of forced labour, which India cites to prove its global compliance.
- **Article 297:** Establishes that things of value within territorial waters or the continental shelf vest in the Union, relevant for maritime trade and resources.

### Additional Key Points

- **The El Niño Shadow:** Historically, 8 out of the last 24 years with El Niño saw monsoons 1-22% below the LPA, often leading to a drop in kharif output (as high as 23.3% in 2002).
- **Energy Costs:** Petroleum and plastic prices rose sharply month-on-month in April 2026, signaling that manufacturers may soon pass these costs to consumers.
- **Structural Shift:** While rain remains critical, India's dependence on the monsoon for GDP growth has marginally decreased due to improved irrigation and a robust services sector.

### Conclusion

India stands at a complex economic crossroads in mid-2026. Domestically, the government must navigate the "twin shocks" of a potential drought and war-induced energy inflation. Internationally, it must defend its manufacturing sovereignty against unilateral trade probes that challenge its comparative advantage. Success will depend on aggressive water management and sophisticated trade diplomacy to ensure that "Viksit Bharat" remains on track despite these external and environmental headwinds.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Economy):** Issues related to inflation (CPI/WPI), monetary policy, and the impact of the monsoon on agriculture and rural demand.
- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** India-US bilateral trade relations, the role of USTR, and the impact of global conflicts (West Asia) on the Indian economy.
- **GS Paper I (Geography):** Monsoon dynamics, El Niño, and the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD).

## 12. CAFÉ - III Norms 2027: Balancing Emission Targets and Auto Industry Interests

- **Consensus on CAFE-3:** A broad agreement has been reached between the government and the auto industry regarding the Carbon Average Fuel Efficiency (CAFE-3) norms set to commence in 2027, following a prolonged deadlock between manufacturers of small and large vehicles.
- **Flatter Compliance Curve:** The latest draft introduces a flatter compliance slope (starting at 0.00158 in the first year and reaching 0.00131 in the fifth) instead of steep annual tightening, allowing the industry more time to transition without compromising the 2032 targets.
- **Removal of Weight-Based Relaxations:** In a significant shift from the September 2025 draft, the current proposal removes specific relaxations previously offered to lighter vehicles, thereby creating a more uniform compliance burden across different vehicle segments.
- **Impact on Fleet Averages:** The flatter curve effectively tightens emission targets for heavier vehicles (SUVs) while providing slight relief for vehicles falling below the industry average weight of 1229 kg, aiming to balance the interests of diverse portfolios.



- **Super Credit Scheme for EVs:** To incentivize green mobility, the norms include a "Super Credit" system where Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs) are counted as three units (3x) in fleet average calculations, helping manufacturers meet stringent CO<sub>2</sub> targets.
- **Inter-Ministerial Collaboration:** The norms are being finalized through a joint effort by the Ministry of Power, Ministry of Heavy Industries, and the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, under the technical guidance of the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE).

**Green Goal**  
BUREAU OF ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROPOSALS

91.7 gm CO<sub>2</sub>/km  
CAFE 3

70 gm CO<sub>2</sub>/km  
CAFE 4  
(\*Corporate average fuel efficiency)

5 Years: Extended time for auto cos to shift to CAFE 4

**EXPLAINER**  
CAFE norms applicable on entire fleet  
They limit carbon emissions from total number of vehicles sold by a carmaker in fiscal year  
Manufacturers face penalties for non-compliance with set limits

### Key Definitions

- **CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency):** Regulations aimed at lowering the fuel consumption (and thus CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) of a manufacturer's entire fleet by assigning a target based on the average of all vehicles produced.
- **Super Credits:** A regulatory mechanism where zero or low-emission vehicles (like EVs) are given higher weightage in fleet calculations, making it easier for manufacturers to achieve overall emission compliance.
- **Compliance Slope:** A mathematical value (grams of CO<sub>2</sub> per km per unit of mass) that determines how much more CO<sub>2</sub> a heavier vehicle is allowed to emit compared to a lighter one.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A:** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment. CAFE norms are a direct executive tool to fulfill this Directive Principle by reducing vehicular pollution.
- **Article 51A(g):** Imposes a fundamental duty on citizens (and by extension, corporate entities) to protect the natural environment.
- **Energy Conservation Act, 2001:** Provides the legal backing for the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) to float and implement fuel efficiency standards like CAFE.
- **Environment Protection Act, 1986:** Empowers the central government to take measures to protect and improve environmental quality, under which vehicular emission standards are periodically updated.

### Additional Key Points

- **The Industry Split:** Previously, manufacturers with large SUV portfolios (like Tata and Mahindra) argued that weight-based relaxations unfairly benefited small-car manufacturers (like Maruti), leading to the current compromise.
- **National Interest vs. Commercial Stretch:** Industry leaders have noted that while meeting the CAFE-3 targets will be a financial and technical "stretch," the agreement was reached to support India's "Net Zero" commitments.
- **Global Alignment:** These norms bring Indian vehicular emission standards closer to Euro-6 and upcoming Euro-7 equivalents, enhancing the global competitiveness of Indian-made automobiles.



## Conclusion

The consensus on CAFE-3 norms reflects a maturing regulatory environment in India where environmental goals are balanced with industrial feasibility. By removing weight-based loopholes and focusing on a flatter transition curve, the government has ensured that both small and large car manufacturers contribute equitably to reducing the transport sector's carbon footprint. This move is a critical pillar in India's broader strategy to transition toward electric and high-efficiency mobility by 2030.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Environment):** Conservation, environmental pollution, and degradation; specifically, initiatives to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the transport sector.
- **GS Paper III (Economy):** Infrastructure: Energy and Transport; Impact of industrial policy on the automotive sector and the "Make in India" initiative.



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