



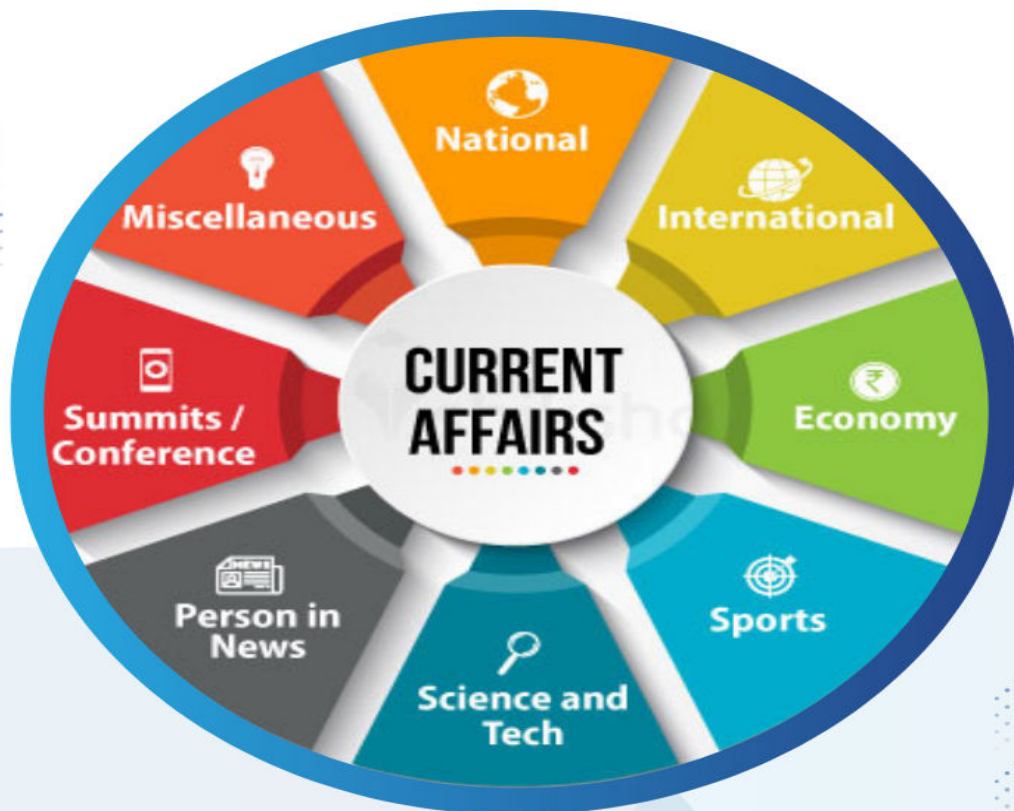
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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & **STUDY CENTRE**

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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 20/04/2026 (MONDAY)



9972258970 & 9740702455

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



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VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. Punjab Anti-Sacrilege Law: Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Summary and Core Provisions

- **Legislative Assent:** Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria has granted assent to the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill, 2026, officially transitioning the Bill into a functional state law aimed at deterring sacrilege.
- **Tiered Sentencing Structure:** The law introduces a rigorous punishment framework where general acts of sacrilege attract a minimum of 7 years, extendable to 20 years, alongside fines ranging from ₹2 lakh to ₹10 lakh.
- **Focus on Communal Harmony:** Crimes committed through "criminal conspiracy" with the intent to disrupt peace or communal harmony carry the severest penalties, including life imprisonment and fines up to ₹25 lakh.
- **Criminalization of Attempt:** The Act ensures that even the attempt to commit sacrilege is a punishable offense, carrying a sentence of 3 to 5 years and fines between ₹1 lakh and ₹3 lakh.
- **Historical Context:** This legislation amends the 2008 Act and follows years of public unrest and protests regarding *beadbi* (sacrilege), reflecting a significant legislative response to deep-seated socio-religious sensitivities in Punjab.
- **Legislative Unanimity:** The Bill was passed unanimously by the Punjab Vidhan Sabha during a special session, signaling a rare cross-party consensus on the protection of religious sanctity within the state.

Definitions and Conceptual Clarity

- **Sacrilege (Beadbi):** Technically refers to the violation or misuse of what is regarded as sacred. In the context of this Act, it specifically pertains to any act that desecrates or shows disrespect toward the Sri Guru Granth Sahib.
- **Assent:** The formal agreement by the Governor (at the State level) or President (at the Union level) to a Bill passed by the legislature, which is the final step for a Bill to become an Act/Law.
- **Criminal Conspiracy:** When two or more persons agree to do, or cause to be done, an illegal act or an act which is not illegal by illegal means.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 200:** This Constitutional provision governs the Governor's power regarding Bills passed by the State Legislature (Granting assent, withholding assent, or reserving the Bill for the President).
- **Article 25-28:** Freedom of Religion. While the law protects religious sentiments, it must be balanced against the constitutional right to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion.

Anti-sacrilege Bill has now become law with assent of Governor, says Punjab CM

Press Trust of India
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Governor Gulab Chand Kataria has given his assent to the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill, 2026, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said on Sunday.

The Bill proposed stricter punishment, including life imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹25 lakh, for any act of sacrilege against the Guru Granth Sahib. It was unanimously passed by the Punjab Assembly on April 13 and was sent to the Governor for his assent.

Mr. Mann said the Bill passed against "beadbi" (sacrilege) "of the Guru Granth Sahib has now become law after receiving the assent of the Governor, marking a significant step towards safeguarding the sanctity of the holy book."

"The Bill passed in the Vidhan Sabha against the sacrilege of Sri Guru Granth Sahib has been signed by the Governor. Now, this Bill has become a law. I am very grateful to Waheguruji for taking this service from a humble person like me. Thanks to the entire Sangat," Mr. Mann said in a post on X.

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government on April



Bhagwant Mann

13 had convened a special session of the Assembly to amend the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar Act, 2008, to make way for stricter punishment against sacrilege of the Guru Granth Sahib.

The acts of sacrilege against religious scriptures have been an emotive issue in Punjab. There were demands from various quarters for stringent punishment for acts of sacrilege against religious texts.

Activist Gurjeet Singh Khalsa has been sitting atop a 400-foot mobile tower in Samana since October 12, 2024, demanding stringent punishment for sacrilege incidents.

According to the Bill, any person who commits sacrilege shall get a minimum of seven years of imprisonment, extendable up to 20 years, along with

a fine of ₹2 lakh to ₹10 lakh. Any person, who in criminal conspiracy, commits sacrilege with an intention to disrupt peace or communal harmony shall get a minimum of 10 years of imprisonment, extendable up to imprisonment for life, along with a fine of ₹5 lakh which may extend to ₹25 lakh, as per the Bill.

Any person who attempts to commit an offence shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term that shall not be less than three years but may extend to five years, and shall be liable to a fine which shall not be less than ₹1 lakh but may extend to ₹3 lakh.

Parties welcome move
Leader of the Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa of the Congress said the Governor's assent to the Bill is a welcome step, "but laws mean little without intent and action".

State BJP president Sunil Jakhar thanked the Governor for giving assent to the Bill. He also urged the Punjab government to introduce in the Assembly the draft Bill on preventing sacrilege of all religious texts - currently with a Select Committee of the House - to enact a law.



- **Sections 295 & 295A of BNS (formerly IPC):** These deal with "Injuring or defiling place of worship with intent to insult the religion of any class" and "Deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings." The new Punjab law enhances these penalties specifically for the state.
- **Entry 1 & 2 (State List):** Public Order and Police are state subjects under the Seventh Schedule, providing the legislative competence for the State Assembly to enact laws ensuring local peace.

Critical Analysis and Keypoints

- **Deterrence vs. Civil Liberties:** While the law seeks to prevent communal violence triggered by sacrilege, legal experts often debate whether life imprisonment for religious desecration is proportionate or if it risks being misused.
- **Scope of the Law:** Currently, this specific amendment focuses on the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. There is ongoing political discourse regarding extending similar protections to the holy books of all religions through a separate draft Bill currently with a Select Committee.
- **Administrative Burden:** Implementation will require sensitive handling by the state police to ensure that charges are based on objective evidence to prevent communal polarization.

Conclusion: The enactment of the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill, 2026, represents a culmination of intense political and social pressure in Punjab. By significantly raising the "cost" of sacrilege, the state government aims to provide a legal deterrent against acts that have historically led to large-scale civil unrest. However, the efficacy of the law will depend on its judicial scrutiny and the state's ability to balance communal sentiments with the principles of criminal jurisprudence.

2. Hanging Glaciers in Central Himalaya: A Growing Alpine Hazard

Core Findings and Vulnerabilities

- **Hazard Identification:** A collaborative study by IISc, IIT, and DRDO has identified 219 hanging glaciers in Uttarakhand's Alaknanda basin, covering 72 sq km with an estimated 2.39 cubic km of ice volume.
- **Stability Crisis:** Nearly one-third of these glaciers are categorized as "highly unstable" due to accelerated warming in the Himalayas, which has exceeded the global average over the last two decades.
- **The "Detachment" Mechanism:** Climate warming causes tributary glaciers to detach from main trunk glaciers, leaving unstable ice masses clinging to steep slopes that eventually shed mass through devastating ice avalanches.
- **Human Exposure Risks:** Rapid infrastructure expansion in high-altitude zones has increased the vulnerable built-up area from 8,000 sq m in 2000 to a projected 150,000 sq m by 2030, specifically in the Badrinath-Mana stretch.
- **Secondary Disasters:** Beyond direct burial by debris (up to 50m high), these avalanches can block river courses, creating temporary dams that lead to Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) downstream.
- **Mitigation Strategy:** The study advocates for "targeted monitoring" of the most perilous glaciers as a practical first step, given the vast and rugged nature of the Himalayan terrain.





Definitions and Technical Terms

- **Hanging Glacier:** A glacier that terminates at the edge of a cliff or steep slope, often "hanging" above a valley floor, making it prone to frequent calving and ice avalanches.
- **Alaknanda Basin:** A critical headstream region of the Ganga in Uttarakhand, characterized by extreme elevation gradients (400m to 7,800m) and high seismicity.
- **Mass Shedding:** The process by which a glacier loses ice or snow mass, typically through melting or gravity-driven movements like avalanches.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A:** Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) which mandates the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife.
- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental Duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Provides the legal framework for disaster risk reduction (DRR). The findings emphasize the need for "State Disaster Management Authorities" (SDMAs) to incorporate cryospheric hazards into their Zonal Master Plans.
- **National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC):** Specifically the National Mission for Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem (NMSHE) which aims to monitor the health of glaciers and ecological sustainability in the region.

Critical Analysis and Impact: The Central Himalayas are geologically fragile "young fold mountains." The intersection of climate-induced glacial instability and anthropogenic pressure (hydro-power projects, pilgrimage tourism, and road construction like the Char Dham project) creates a "compounded risk." The high seismicity of the Alaknanda basin means that even a minor tectonic tremor can trigger the collapse of these already unstable hanging ice masses. This study underscores that disaster management must move from "reactive relief" to "predictive monitoring" using grid-based numerical models and satellite imagery.

Conclusion: The transition of previously stable mountain glaciers into unstable hanging masses is a direct physical manifestation of the climate crisis in the Third Pole. As human settlements push higher into glacier-fed valleys, the margin for error disappears. Balancing developmental needs with the inherent geological and cryospheric risks of the Alaknanda basin is no longer optional but a survival imperative for the region.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Geography (Geophysical phenomena, changes in critical geographical features like ice-caps, and their effects).
- **GS Paper III:** Environment and Disaster Management (Climate change impact on Himalayas, landslide and avalanche mitigation, and sustainable development in fragile ecosystems).

3. Delimitation Framework and Constitutional Representation: A Critical Analysis

Summary and Core Issues

- **Constitutional Autonomy:** Former Lok Sabha Secretary General P.D.T. Achary emphasizes that the Delimitation Commission must function as an independent constitutional body, free from executive interference, particularly in deciding inter-state seat allocation under Article 81(2)(a).



- **The "Census Data" Controversy:** A significant debate has emerged over the government's proposal to use 2011 Census data (already 15 years old) or a projected uniform 50% increase in seats, rather than waiting for the 2026 Census results, which critics argue lacks a rational constitutional basis.
- **The "One Person, One Vote" Dilemma:** Article 81(2)(a) mandates that the ratio between seats and population should be the same for all states. However, rigid adherence to this today would penalize Southern states (e.g., Kerala) for successful population control while rewarding Northern states (e.g., Uttar Pradesh).
- **Federal Trust Deficit:** There is a growing concern that any sudden shift in the delimitation formula could lead to political domination by high-population regions, nursing grievances in states that have achieved higher levels of social and economic development.
- **Judicial Review:** Contrary to the traditional view of absolute immunity, the Supreme Court in *Kishorchandra Chhaganlal Rathod vs. Union of India (2024)* held that Commission orders are not entirely insusceptible to judicial review if they are "manifestly arbitrary" or "irreconcilable to constitutional values."
- **Consensus-Based Approach:** Experts argue that a decision of this magnitude, which reshapes the nation's political landscape, cannot be settled in a short parliamentary session; it requires deep consultation with state governments and a scientific, non-partisan formula.



Definitions and Key Concepts

- **Delimitation:** The act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats to represent changes in population.
- **Article 81(2)(a):** The constitutional provision mandating that the number of seats allotted to a State is proportional to its population.
- **Article 82:** Empowering Parliament to enact a Delimitation Act after every Census, leading to the appointment of a Delimitation Commission.
- **Basic Structure Doctrine:** A judicial principle that certain fundamental features of the Constitution (like federalism and judicial review) cannot be altered by Parliament.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **84th & 87th Amendment Acts:** These amendments froze the total number of seats in Lok Sabha based on the 1971 Census until the first census after 2026 to encourage population stabilization.
- **Article 329:** Traditionally bars courts from interfering in electoral matters, including the delimitation of constituencies, though recent 2024 rulings have nuanced this "total immunity."
- **Women's Reservation Act (106th Amendment):** The operationalization of 33% reservation for women is legally linked to the completion of the next delimitation exercise, adding urgency to the debate.

Critical Analysis and Impact The delimitation row is no longer just a technical exercise; it is a test of **Cooperative Federalism**. At present, an MP in North India may represent nearly double the population of an MP in South India, creating a tension between democratic equality ("one person, one vote") and federal



equity (not penalizing performance). Using 2011 data for a 2026 exercise is seen by experts like Achary as "destabilizing" the stable framework provided by Article 82.

Conclusion A "one-size-fits-all" population formula risks creating a permanent political imbalance in the Indian Union. The way forward lies in a "Hybrid Model" that considers population alongside other factors like demographic performance, economic contribution, and social indicators to ensure that no region feels marginalized in the national discourse.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution (Amendments, Basic Structure), Parliament and State Legislatures (Structure, functioning, conduct of business), and Federalism (Inter-state issues).
- **GS Paper I:** Social Issues (Demographic transition, population control).

4. India-Sri Lanka Relations: Expansion of OCI Eligibility for Indian Diaspora

Summary and Key Developments

- **OCI Extension:** Vice-President C.P. Radhakrishnan announced the extension of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card eligibility for the Indian-origin community in Sri Lanka up to the sixth generation, a significant jump from the previous fourth-generation limit.
- **Diplomatic Outreach:** The move is viewed as a major strategic outreach to the Indian-origin Tamil (IOT) community, who constitute roughly 7% of Sri Lanka's population, strengthening "civilisational roots" and people-to-people ties.
- **Bilateral Discussions:** High-level talks between the Vice-President and Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake covered multifaceted ties, including housing projects, the sensitive fishermen issue, and ongoing Indian development projects.
- **Economic Assistance:** Sri Lanka expressed gratitude for India's "Neighbourhood First" policy, citing India's role as a "first responder" during the 2022 economic crisis, the debt crisis, and the recent \$450 million aid package for Cyclone Ditwah relief.
- **Documentation Ease:** Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri clarified that OCI cards would now be issued based on documents that, in several cases, are issued by the Government of Sri Lanka, simplifying the verification process for the diaspora.
- **Strategic Stability:** The visit underscores India's commitment to regional stability and its evolution from a traditional neighbor to a reliable security and economic partner in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).



Definitions and Key Terms

- **Overseas Citizen of India (OCI):** A category of registration introduced in 2005 for foreign citizens of Indian origin, providing them with a multi-purpose, multi-entry, lifelong visa for visiting India and certain economic/educational parity with NRIs.
- **Indian-Origin Tamils (IOT):** Descendants of workers brought from India by the British in the 19th and 20th centuries to work on tea, rubber, and coffee plantations in Sri Lanka (distinct from Sri Lankan Tamils).



- **Neighbourhood First Policy:** A core component of India's foreign policy that focuses on managing relations with its immediate neighbors through active engagement and developmental support.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Citizenship Act, 1955:** Sections 7A to 7D of this Act govern the registration, rights, and cancellation of OCI cards. It was notably amended in 2015 to merge the Person of Indian Origin (PIO) card scheme with OCI.
- **Article 11 of the Constitution:** Empowers Parliament to regulate the right of citizenship by law. OCI is a statutory right, not a constitutional one, and does not grant "dual citizenship."
- **Entry 17 (Union List):** Citizenship, naturalization, and aliens fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Union Government under the Seventh Schedule.
- **Article 5-10:** These deal with citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution; OCI is a later legislative addition meant for the diaspora.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **Fishermen Issue:** Both nations discussed addressing the arrest of fishermen in a humanitarian manner, emphasizing the need to protect the livelihoods of coastal communities on both sides of the Palk Strait.
- **Cyclone Ditrwah Aid:** The \$450 million aid highlights India's use of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) as a tool for soft-power diplomacy.
- **Strategic Security:** India's role as a "first responder" is crucial in the context of countering the growing influence of extra-regional powers in the Sri Lankan maritime domain.

Conclusion The extension of OCI eligibility to the sixth generation for Sri Lankan Indians is a landmark shift in India's diaspora policy. By relaxing generational limits and simplifying documentation, New Delhi is leveraging its "soft power" to secure its "hard interests." This move not only addresses long-standing identity grievances of the plantation Tamil community but also cements India's position as a benevolent and reliable partner in Sri Lanka's long-term recovery and growth.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its Neighborhood- Relations; Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India; Effect of Policies and Politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Indian Diaspora.
- **GS Paper III:** Security Challenges and their Management in Border Areas; Disaster Management (First responder role).

5. India's Three-Stage Nuclear Power Programme: The Strategic Role of Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs)

Summary and Key Technical Highlights

- **The Critical Milestone:** With India's first indigenous Fast Breeder Reactor (FBR) at Kalpakkam reaching criticality, the nation has officially entered the crucial second stage of its three-stage nuclear power programme, aiming for long-term energy self-reliance.
- **Fuel Cycle Transition:** FBRs are designed to utilize plutonium (derived from Stage 1 Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors) and depleted uranium to produce more fuel than they consume, effectively "breeding" energy resources.



- **Thorium Utilization:** The FBR stage serves as a bridge to the third stage, where thorium-232 is converted into fissile uranium-233, allowing India to tap into its vast domestic thorium reserves (the world's largest).
- **Capacity Expansion Goals:** The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL) aims to scale current capacity to 22 GWe by 2031-32 and approximately 54 GWe by 2047, driven by a mix of indigenous PHWRs, FBRs, and Light Water Reactors (LWRs).
- **Indigenous Technology vs. Import:** While India continues to collaborate with Russia for VVER-1000 technology (Kudankulam), the focus remains on the indigenous 700 MWe PHWR design and high-tech FBRs to overcome historical "technological denial" regimes.
- **Private Sector Integration:** Under recent deregulation, NPCIL is set to play a "motherly role," fostering private participation in technology, project development, and complex core-job designs to accelerate the ecosystem's growth.

Definitions and Technical Concepts

- **Fast Breeder Reactor (FBR):** A nuclear reactor that generates more fissile material than it consumes by using fast neutrons to convert fertile material (like Uranium-238) into fissile fuel (Plutonium-239).
- **Criticality:** The state of a nuclear reactor when a self-sustaining chain reaction is achieved, meaning the rate of neutron production equals the rate of neutron loss.
- **PHWR (Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor):** A nuclear power reactor, commonly using unenriched natural uranium as its fuel, that uses heavy water (deuterium oxide D₂O) as its coolant and moderator.
- **GWe (Gigawatt Electrical):** A unit of power equal to one billion watts of electric capacity.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Atomic Energy Act, 1962:** The primary legal framework providing the Central Government with the power to produce, use, and dispose of atomic energy. It mandates strict state control over "prescribed substances" like Uranium and Thorium.
- **Entry 6 (Union List):** Atomic Energy and mineral resources necessary for its production are under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Union Government under the Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- **Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010:** Provides for civil liability for nuclear damage and prompt compensation to victims of a nuclear incident through a no-fault liability regime.

India's Three-Stage Nuclear Programme (Homi Bhabha Vision)

1. **Stage 1: PHWRs** using natural uranium to produce electricity and Plutonium-239 as a byproduct.
2. **Stage 2: FBRs** using Plutonium-239 and Uranium-238 to breed more Plutonium and eventually convert Thorium into Uranium-233.
3. **Stage 3: Breeder Reactors** using Thorium-232 and Uranium-233 to ensure indefinite energy security.

Conclusion India's nuclear trajectory is moving from "technological denial" to "technological mastery." The success of the Kalpakkam FBR is not just a scientific achievement but a strategic necessity to bypass the constraints of limited domestic uranium. By integrating private industry and streamlining indigenous



designs, India is positioning nuclear energy as a clean, base-load alternative to fossil fuels, essential for achieving its Net-Zero 2070 targets.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology (Indigenization of technology, developments in the field of Nuclear Energy); Economic Development (Energy security, Infrastructure).
- **GS Paper II:** Government Policies and Interventions (Atomic Energy Act, deregulation of the power sector).

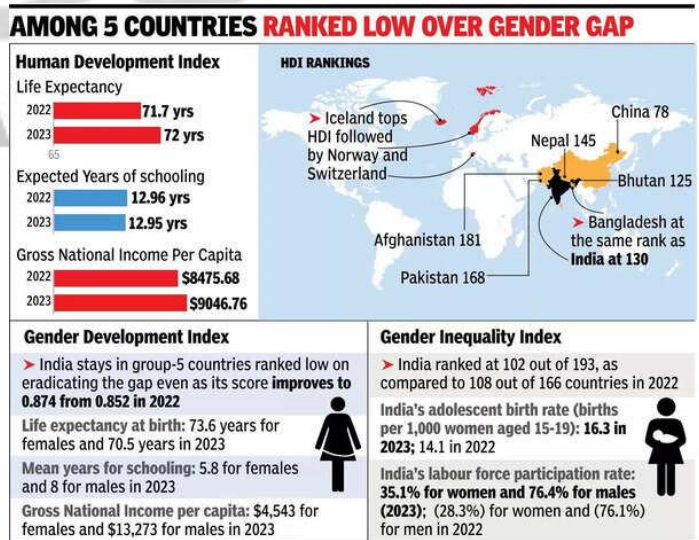
6. Gender Dynamics in India's Economy and Governance: Trends and Disparities (2025-26)

Summary and Key Indicators

- **Rising Participation:** India's Female Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) has shown a consistent upward trajectory, reaching a record high of **35.3%** in December 2025, primarily driven by rural engagement.
- **The "Glass Ceiling" in Leadership:** Despite rising economic participation, women remain significantly underrepresented in decision-making roles, holding only **13.1%** of positions as legislators, senior officials, and managers.
- **Political Disparity:** Women constitute only **13.6%** of the Lok Sabha (74 out of 543 members as of April 2026), trailing well behind the global average of approximately **26%**.
- **Economic Productivity Link:** Research indicates that constituencies led by women legislators exhibit **1.8 percentage points** higher economic performance annually compared to those led by men, suggesting a "gender dividend" in governance.
- **Institutional Lag:** Premier academic institutions show a stark gender gap in faculty positions, with women making up only **16%** of faculty at IIT-Bombay and **20%** at IIM-Ahmedabad (2025 data).
- **The Delimitation Stumbling Block:** The operationalization of the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam** (Women's Reservation Act) remains stalled due to its legal linkage with the upcoming census and delimitation exercise.

Definitions and Technical Concepts

- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):** The percentage of the population that is either working or actively seeking work.
- **Worker Population Ratio (WPR):** The percentage of the population that is actually employed; it excludes those seeking work (the unemployed).
- **Usual Status (ps+ss):** A measurement approach in the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) that considers an individual's activity status over the preceding 365 days.
- **Glass Ceiling:** An unofficial barrier to advancement in a profession, especially affecting women and members of minorities.





Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 15(3):** Empowers the State to make special provisions for women and children (the constitutional basis for affirmative action).
- **Article 39(a) & (d):** Directive Principles (DPSP) mandating that the state secure an adequate means of livelihood for all and ensure "equal pay for equal work" for both men and women.
- **106th Constitutional Amendment Act (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam):** Mandates **33% reservation** for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, inserting Articles 330A and 332A.
- **Article 243D & 243T:** Provides for 1/3rd reservation for women in Panchayats and Municipalities; notably, many states have increased this to **50%**.

Critical Analysis: The Implementation Gap The data presents a paradox: while women are entering the workforce at higher rates (primarily in the informal and rural sectors), their "presence at the top" remains dismal. The World Bank notes that for India to become a developed economy by 2047, a sustained **8% annual growth** is required, which is unattainable without bridging the gender gap in the high-value formal sector. The current linkage of women's political reservation to the delimitation process—a historically contentious and delayed exercise—acts as a "stumbling block" for immediate political empowerment.

Conclusion India is witnessing a "bottom-up" transition where women are increasingly vital to the grassroots economy and local governance (Panchayats). However, the "top-down" transition into higher management and national legislation is hindered by systemic biases and legislative delays. True gender parity will require decoupling political representation from the census-delimitation cycle and promoting labour-intensive industries that can absorb the rising female labour force.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Social Issues (Role of women and women's organizations, population and associated issues).
- **GS Paper II:** Governance and Polity (Constitutional amendments, pressure groups, and formal/informal associations).

7. Decentralized Agricultural Governance: State-Specific Road Maps for Farm Policy

Summary and Strategic Shift

- **Departure from Uniformity:** India is transitioning from a "one-size-fits-all" national agricultural policy to decentralized, state-specific road maps designed to align farming practices with local agro-climatic conditions.
- **Economic Contribution:** Agriculture and allied sectors contribute approximately 15.6% to India's national income (2025-26) and employ 46.1% of the workforce, making localized productivity gains essential for national economic resilience.
- **Sectoral Growth Drivers:** While overall sector growth averages 4.4%, allied sectors like livestock (7.1%) and fisheries (8.8%) are outperforming traditional crops (3.5%), necessitating specific road maps to balance these disparities.
- **Climate Adaptation:** The policy shift prioritizes climate resilience, focusing on drought-resistant crops and efficient irrigation to mitigate the impact of disrupted monsoon cycles and worsening water scarcity.



- **Resource Optimization:** By focusing on the "right crops" for specific regions—as seen in Madhya Pradesh's district-level plans—the government aims to optimize water use, soil health, and resource allocation.
- **Implementation Hurdles:** The success of these road maps faces challenges including a lack of granular data on soil and water, funding constraints for infrastructure, and the inherent risk aversion of farmers toward diversification.

Definitions and Key Concepts

- **Agro-Climatic Zones:** Geographical areas classified according to their climate, soil type, and water availability, which dictate the suitability of specific crops and farming practices.
- **Allied Activities:** Economic sectors associated with agriculture, including animal husbandry, dairying, fisheries, and forestry, which often provide higher value-addition than seasonal cropping.
- **Market Linkages:** The infrastructure and networks (storage, transport, procurement) that connect farmers to consumers, ensuring that increased productivity translates into higher rural incomes.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Entry 14 (State List):** Agriculture, including agricultural education and research, protection against pests and prevention of plant diseases, is primarily a State subject under the Seventh Schedule.
- **Entry 21 (State List):** Fisheries is also a State subject, providing the legal basis for states to lead the design of their specific road maps.
- **Article 243G:** Empowering Panchayats to prepare plans for economic development and social justice, specifically regarding agriculture and land improvement.
- **Inter-State Council (Article 263):** A potential platform for coordinating national food security goals with state-specific agricultural road maps to avoid inter-state competition or surpluses.

Additional Key Points for UPSC

- **Productivity vs. Income:** The focus is shifting from merely increasing "output per acre" to improving "output per worker," addressing the disguised unemployment prevalent in the rural sector.
- **Data-Driven Governance:** The policy emphasizes the need for a Digital Agriculture Mission to provide the granular data necessary for district-level planning.
- **Water-Energy-Food Nexus:** State road maps must address the unsustainable use of groundwater driven by power subsidies, particularly in the Northwest granaries.

Conclusion Reworking the agricultural playbook to empower states is a recognition of India's diverse geography. By tailoring interventions to local resource bases, the government seeks to bridge the gap between potential and actual yields. However, the move requires robust "Cooperative Federalism" where the Centre provides the technological and financial scaffolding while the States drive the execution and data collection. The success of this transition will determine if India can achieve its "Viksit Bharat" goals by 2047 through a sustainable and prosperous rural economy.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Federalism (Centre-State relations in agricultural policy), Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.



- **GS Paper III:** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System; Technology missions; Economics of animal-rearing.

8. Hungary General Elections 2026: The Fall of the Orbán Era

Summary and Key Global Lessons

- **Democratic Reversal:** Hungarian voters have ended Viktor Orbán's 16-year tenure, proving that "illiberal democracies" or electoral autocracies can be dismantled through the ballot box, challenging the narrative of leader invincibility.
- **Rejection of Majoritarianism:** The victory of Péter Magyar's Tisza party signifies that a majority can vote against majoritarianism, reaffirming that the urge for regime change against perceived tyranny is a persistent democratic force.
- **Foreign Policy Implications:** The election served as a de facto referendum on Ukraine; voters rejected Orbán's pro-Russian "peace plan" and his framing of Ukrainian President Zelenskyy as a political rival.
- **Cronyism and Economic Wreckage:** Public discontent was fueled by "crony capitalism," where state resources and Chinese-backed projects (like the Fudan University campus) allegedly benefited a small circle of Orbán's associates while the broader economy suffered.
- **Geopolitical Realignment:** Orbán's defeat represents a strategic setback for the "illiberal international alliance," weakening Vladimir Putin's influence in the EU and disrupting Xi Jinping's "all-weather" partnership with Hungary.
- **Sovereignty vs. Interference:** While Orbán campaigned on anti-colonial rhetoric against the EU, the electorate prioritized internal accountability over narratives of "foreign interference" and state-sponsored disinformation campaigns.

Definitions and Political Concepts

- **Illiberal Democracy:** A governing system where, although elections take place, citizens are cut off from knowledge about the activities of those who exercise real power because of the lack of civil liberties.
- **Electoral Autocracy:** A regime that holds regular elections but fails to meet democratic standards like a free press, independent judiciary, or a level playing field for the opposition.
- **Majoritarianism:** A traditional political philosophy or agenda which asserts that a majority of the population is entitled to a certain degree of primacy in society and has the right to make decisions that affect the society.
- **Cronyism:** The appointment of friends and associates to positions of authority, without proper regard to their qualifications, often leading to systemic corruption.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions (International & Comparative)

- **Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU):** Explicitly states that the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law.
- **The "Rule of Law" Mechanism:** An EU regulation that allows the European Commission to pause funding to member states (as it did with Hungary) if breaches of the principles of the rule of law affect the EU budget.



- **Rome Statute & ICC Warrants:** The International Criminal Court (ICC) issues arrest warrants for war crimes; Hungary's previous refusal to honor warrants for leaders like Putin and Netanyahu highlighted a conflict between domestic policy and international legal obligations.
- **Representation of the People Act:** While specific to India, the comparative lesson from Hungary emphasizes the importance of free and fair elections as the "Basic Structure" of any democratic constitution.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **The "Magyar" Factor:** The rise of Péter Magyar suggests that successful opposition often emerges from within the former establishment, using the incumbent's tactics to flip the electorate.
- **The "West vs Rest" Fallacy:** The Hungarian result complicates the binary view of the West as inherently democratic and the Rest as inherently autocratic, showing that democratic struggles are now global and interconnected.
- **Media Hegemony:** Orbán's control over 90% of Hungarian media was bypassed through grassroots mobilization and digital platforms, offering a blueprint for opposition in media-restricted environments.

Conclusion The 2026 Hungarian election marks a watershed moment in contemporary geopolitics. It shatters the myth that once a leader captures state institutions and the media, they become electorally "unbeatable." By choosing a path of European integration over Eurasian illiberalism, Hungarian voters have potentially signaled a broader "democratic recession" reaching its floor, making way for a resurgence of universal democratic values.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper IV:** Ethics and Human Interface (Values in governance, democratic ethics vs. authoritarian tendencies).

9. El Niño and the Indian Monsoon: Analyzing the 25-Year Impact (2000–2025)

Summary and Core Climatic Trends

- **Inherent Correlation:** Historical data from 2000 to 2025 demonstrates a strong inverse relationship between El Niño events and the South-West Monsoon, with almost all El Niño years resulting in below-normal rainfall.
- **Projections for 2026:** With 2026 forecasted as an El Niño year, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and global agencies anticipate a potential rainfall deficit, diverging from the supportive "Normal" or "Above-Normal" rain seen during La Niña phases.
- **Impact of Event Intensity:** While "Very Strong" El Niño events historically trigger severe droughts (e.g., the -10.5% deviation noted in specific cycles), even "Weak-to-Moderate" events frequently push rainfall into the negative territory.
- **The La Niña Buffer:** Conversely, La Niña years act as a significant hydrological buffer for India, consistently yielding positive rainfall deviations (peaking near 7.9% in recorded strong cycles).



- **Oceanic Niño Index (ONI) Significance:** The classification of these years relies on the ONI, which measures sea surface temperature anomalies in the east-central Pacific, serving as the primary predictor for Indian agricultural planning.
- **Neutral Year Variability:** Years classified as "Neutral" (indicated by an asterisk) show high variability, suggesting that other factors like the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) play a crucial secondary role in determining monsoon outcomes.



Definitions and Technical Concepts

- **El Niño:** A climate pattern characterized by the unusual warming of surface waters in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, typically leading to suppressed monsoon activity in India.
- **La Niña:** The "cool phase" of the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), where cooler-than-average sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern Pacific often enhance the Indian monsoon.
- **Oceanic Niño Index (ONI):** The standard tool used by NOAA to identify El Niño and La Niña events by measuring the three-month running mean of sea surface temperature anomalies in the Niño 3.4 region.
- **South-West Monsoon:** The primary rainy season in India (June to September), accounting for over 75% of the country's annual rainfall.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 48:** Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that directs the State to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines, which includes climate-resilient planning.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Provides the legal framework for handling droughts, which are often the direct socio-economic fallout of El Niño-induced rainfall deficits.
- **National Water Policy, 2012:** Stresses the need for integrated water resource management and adaptation strategies for climate change-induced rainfall variability.
- **Section 12 of the DM Act:** Empowers the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to recommend "minimum standards of relief" for victims of natural disasters, including those affected by monsoon failure.

Additional Important Keypoints

- **The IOD Factor:** The Indian Ocean Dipole (a "dual" version of El Niño in the Indian Ocean) can sometimes offset the negative effects of El Niño if it is in a "Positive" phase.
- **Economic Consequences:** A deficit monsoon impacts the Kharif crop cycle, leading to inflationary pressures on food prices (especially pulses and oilseeds) and affecting rural demand.
- **Energy Security:** Lower rainfall reduces reservoir levels, directly impacting hydroelectric power generation and the cooling requirements for thermal power plants.

Conclusion: The 25-year data confirms that El Niño remains the most formidable "wildcard" for the Indian economy. While India has improved its disaster resilience and irrigation coverage, the high percentage of workforce (nearly 46%) still dependent on rain-fed agriculture means that a 2026 El Niño event could pose a



significant challenge to the projected GDP growth. Scientific monitoring and early warning systems are no longer just meteorological tools but essential pillars of national economic strategy.

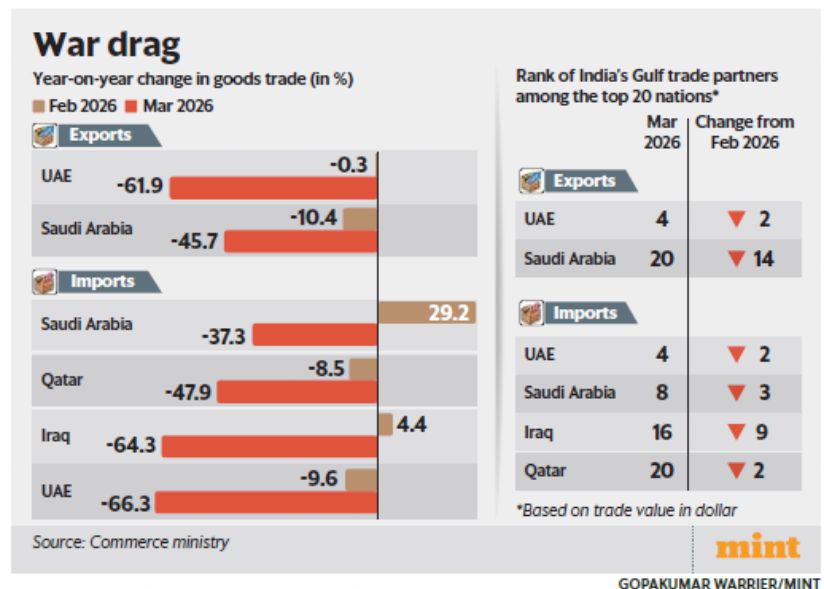
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Geography (Salient features of world’s physical geography; Important geophysical phenomena like ENSO and its impact on the Indian subcontinent).
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy (Issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, and growth); Environment (Climate change and its impact on biodiversity and agriculture).

10. Impact of West Asia Conflict on India's External Trade (FY26)

Summary and Trade Analytics

- **Significant Trade Contraction:** India's merchandise exports declined by 7.4% and imports by 6.5% year-on-year in March 2026, primarily driven by the escalating conflict in West Asia and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Gulf Partner Volatility:** Exports to the UAE and Saudi Arabia—two of India’s top trading partners—crashed by 61.9% and 45.7% respectively, causing the UAE to slip from India's 2nd to 4th largest export destination.
- **Energy Security Vulnerability:** The conflict has crippled energy imports; India relies on Gulf nations for 40% of its total oil and gas requirements, leading to a massive domestic energy crisis following attacks on regional infrastructure.
- **Geopolitical Chokepoints:** The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has essentially halted maritime trade with the Gulf, impacting high-value exports like Basmati rice and critical imports from Iraq and Qatar.
- **Statistical Drag:** Mint calculations indicate that without the Gulf region's decline, India’s export contraction would have been a marginal 1.5% instead of 7.4%, highlighting the disproportionate impact of this single geography.
- **Macroeconomic Resilience:** Despite the war and 50% tariffs imposed by the US, India's overall FY26 exports showed resilience with a 0.93% growth, though imports rose 7.46% largely due to a surging gold import bill.



Definitions and Strategic Terms

- **Strait of Hormuz:** A strategic chokepoint between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman; it is the world's most important oil transit pass, through which approximately 20% of global oil consumption passes.



- **Merchandise Trade:** The physical movement of goods across borders (exports and imports), excluding services.
- **Energy Crisis:** A significant bottleneck in the supply of energy resources to an economy, often leading to price hikes and reduced industrial output.
- **Year-on-Year (y-o-y):** A mathematical method of evaluating a financial statistic of one period at a certain time against the same period of the previous year.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Entry 41 (Union List):** "Trade and commerce with foreign countries; import and export across customs frontiers" falls under the exclusive legislative domain of the Union Government.
- **Article 73:** Extends the executive power of the Union to all matters with respect to which Parliament has the power to make laws, including international trade negotiations and treaty obligations.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Provides the statutory framework for the development and regulation of foreign trade by facilitating imports into, and augmenting exports from, India.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Often invoked during energy crises to regulate the delivery and pricing of petroleum products to protect the domestic economy from global supply shocks.

Additional Strategic Keypoints

- **The "Trump Factor":** India's trade resilience is being tested simultaneously by the West Asia war and 50% US tariffs, marking a shift toward a more protectionist global trade environment.
- **Logistics and Freight:** The war has likely forced a rerouting of shipments, significantly increasing insurance premiums and freight costs for Indian exporters.
- **Bilateral Trade Agreements:** The slump threatens to undermine the gains expected from the India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

Conclusion The March 2026 trade data serves as a stark reminder of India's over-dependence on the West Asian corridor for both energy security and export revenue. While the Indian economy has demonstrated a degree of resilience against global tariffs, the physical blockade of the Strait of Hormuz represents an existential threat to trade stability. Diversification of energy sources and the development of alternative trade routes (like the IMEC or INSTC) are no longer long-term goals but immediate strategic necessities.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its neighborhood- relations; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests (West Asia conflict and US Tariffs).
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, and growth; Infrastructure: Energy and Ports.

11. Uttar Pradesh Interim Minimum Wage Revision 2026: An Analysis

Minimum Wage: The lowest remuneration that an employer is legally required to pay to workers, ensuring a basic standard of living that prevents the exploitation of labor. **Variable Dearness Allowance (VDA):** A component of wages linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) that adjusts the pay scale to compensate for the erosion of purchasing power caused by inflation.



- **Strategic Intervention:** The UP government issued an interim notification effective April 1, 2026, revising minimum wages following labor unrest in industrial hubs like Noida and Ghaziabad caused by wage stagnation and high living costs.
- **Tri-Level Categorization:** The state is divided into three economic zones: Category I (Gautam Buddha Nagar/Ghaziabad), Category II (Municipal Corporations), and Category III (Remaining districts) to account for regional disparities in living costs.
- **Skill-Based Wage Structure:** Wages are tiered based on worker expertise—Unskilled (₹13,690 in Cat-I), Semi-Skilled (₹15,059), and Skilled (₹16,868)—integrating a fixed basic rate with a dynamic VDA component.
- **Inflation Indexing:** By linking the VDA to the All-India Consumer Price Index (which rose from 216 to an average of 425 by 2025), the notification attempts to bridge the gap between stagnant nominal wages and current economic realities.
- **Legal Framework:** The revision utilizes powers under the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, and the United Provinces Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, while aligning with the broader objectives of the Code on Wages, 2019.
- **Implementation Challenges:** While the move provides immediate relief to the industrial workforce, the state faces hurdles in enforcing these rates within the unorganized sector and managing increased labor costs for MSMEs.



Key Statutory and Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 43 (DPSP):** The Constitution mandates the State to strive for a "living wage" and conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life.
- **Minimum Wages Act, 1948:** Provides the statutory framework for fixing and revising minimum rates of wages in scheduled employments.
- **Code on Wages, 2019:** Aims to universalize minimum wages and introduces the concept of a "statutory floor wage" to be set by the Central Government.
- **United Provinces Industrial Disputes Act, 1947:** Grants the State specific powers to intervene in wage matters to maintain industrial peace and resolve disputes.

Additional Key Points

- **Rectification of Delays:** The 2026 revision corrects the "structural deficiencies" caused by the failure to update wages in 2019 and 2024.
- **Interim Nature:** This is a stop-gap measure; the final wage structure will likely be determined once the State Wage Board and rules under the new Labor Codes are finalized.
- **Economic Impact:** Higher wages may boost domestic consumption but could lead to short-term margin compression for industries in the NCR region.



Conclusion

The Uttar Pradesh government's interim wage revision is a pragmatic response to industrial volatility and inflationary pressures. By categorizing regions and indexing wages to the CPI, the state has acknowledged the diverse economic landscape of the region. However, the transition from a "minimum wage" to a "living wage" remains a long-term challenge that requires robust enforcement mechanisms and the formalization of the informal economy.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; Governance and the role of the State in industrial relations.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, and employment; Labor reforms and the impact of the 2019 Wage Code.

12.Parliamentary Panel Recommendations on Modified UDAN Scheme

Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS-UDAN): Launched in 2016, "Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik" is a flagship initiative aimed at making air travel affordable for the masses while connecting unserved and underserved airports through financial stimulus and infrastructure development. **Viability Gap Funding (VGF):** A one-time or deferred grant provided by the government to support infrastructure projects that are economically justified but lack financial viability due to low initial demand.

- **Proposed Financial Outlay:** The government plans to disburse ₹28,840 crore over the next 10 years under the "Modified UDAN" scheme, tripling previous allocations to deepen inclusive air access.
- **Demand for Impact Assessment:** A Parliamentary Panel, headed by Sanjay Kumar Jha, has recommended a comprehensive independent audit to assess profitability and route-wise viability before releasing these massive subsidies.
- **Infrastructure Expansion:** The modified scheme aims to develop 100 airports from unserved airstrips and build specialized infrastructure like water aerodromes and helipads to enhance last-mile connectivity.
- **Shift from Subsidization to Sustainability:** Experts argue that aggressive subsidization should not substitute for organic demand; the panel suggests linking future financial support strictly to performance outcomes and self-sustainability metrics.
- **Correcting Route Failures:** The assessment seeks to identify why several previous routes failed to generate demand, ensuring that the ₹10,043 crore set aside for airline operators is utilized effectively over the next decade.
- **Integration with NITI Aayog:** The panel's report aligns with previous calls by NITI Aayog's Development Monitoring and Evaluation Office for a mid-term appraisal to refine the scheme's design based on empirical data.





Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 246 (Seventh Schedule):** 'Airways; aircraft and air navigation; provision of aerodromes' falls under the Union List (List I, Entry 29), giving the Central Government exclusive power to legislate and manage civil aviation.
- **Directive Principles (Article 38):** The scheme aligns with the State's duty to minimize inequalities in status, facilities, and opportunities among individuals and regions by providing affordable transport infrastructure.
- **The Aircraft Act, 1934 and Aircraft Rules, 1937:** These provide the primary legal framework for the regulation of civil aviation, safety standards, and licensing which govern all UDAN operations.
- **National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) 2016:** The policy framework that birthed UDAN, focusing on creating an ecosystem to push India to become the 3rd largest civil aviation market globally.

Additional Key Points for Analysis

- **The Subsidy Model:** Under UDAN, airlines bid for routes; the government caps fares for 50% of seats and provides VGF to cover the loss, funded partly by a levy on major domestic flights.
- **Water Aerodromes:** A unique feature of the modified scheme focusing on amphibious aircraft to connect remote islands and dams (e.g., Statue of Unity, Lakshadweep).
- **Economic Multiplier:** While the panel focuses on profitability, the scheme is traditionally defended on the grounds of "Induced Demand"—where infrastructure availability leads to regional economic growth, tourism, and job creation.

Conclusion

The Parliamentary Panel's emphasis on "profitability before disbursement" marks a pivotal shift in India's aviation policy—from rapid expansion to fiscal prudence. While UDAN has successfully democratized the skies, the high rate of route closures necessitates a data-driven "Modified UDAN" that balances social inclusivity with commercial realism. Effective implementation will require addressing technical hurdles like pilot shortages and maintenance infrastructure at smaller airstrips.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; Statutory, regulatory, and various quasi-judicial bodies (Parliamentary Committees).
- **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure (Airports); Mobilization of resources; Growth and development; Budgeting and fiscal responsibility (VGF and subsidies).