



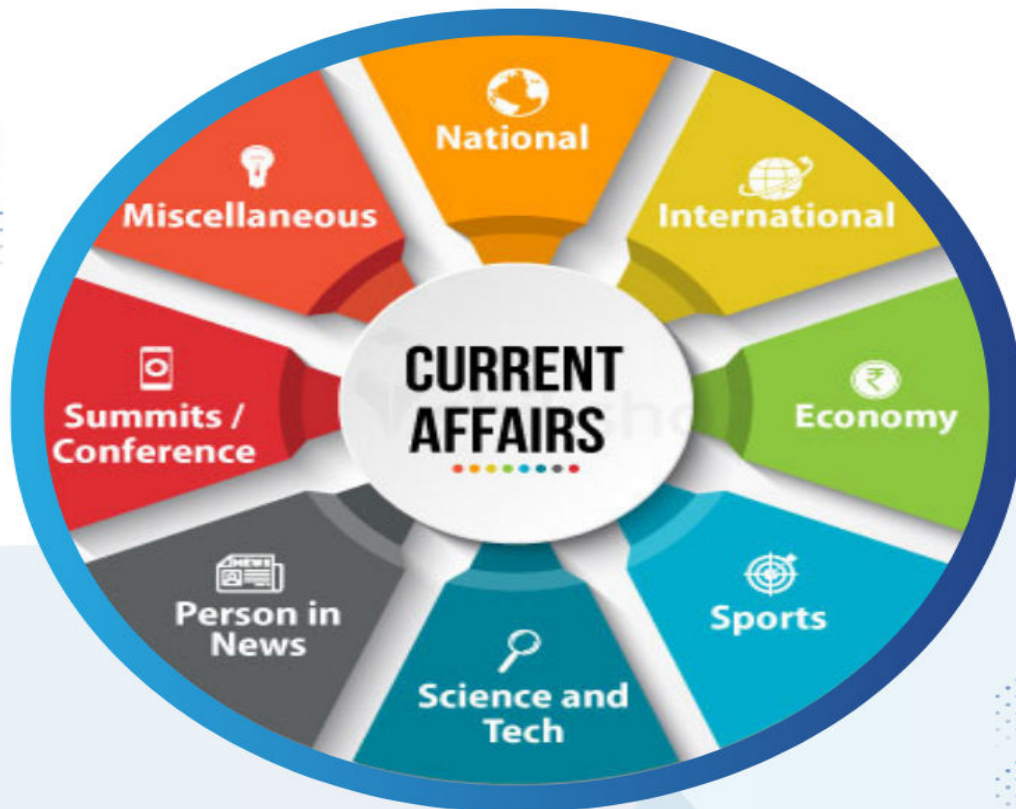
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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY
&
STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 24/04/2026 (FRIDAY)



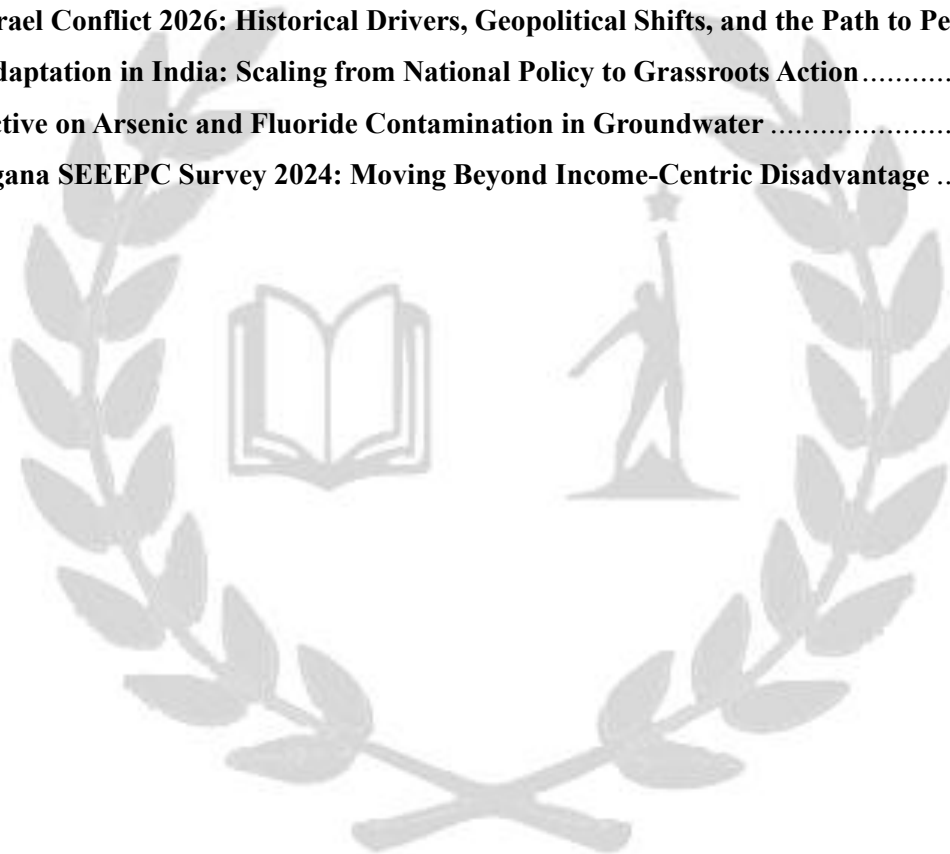
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Table of Contents

1. Expansion of MSP Procurement: Focus on Chhattisgarh and Bihar	2
2. India's Paradigm Shift: Green Economy, Entrepreneurship, and the Role of Youth	3
3. Dynamics of Indian Steel Sector: Q4FY26 Performance and Future Outlook.....	4
4. Strengthening Cyber Defenses in the Banking Sector: Addressing AI-Driven Threats	6
5. Fuel Pricing Dynamics and Under-Recoveries: Impact of Global Volatility on OMCs.....	7
6. India-Africa Partnership: Elevating South-South Cooperation in the Global South	9
7. Unified Drug Regulatory System: India's Digital Leap for Global Quality Standards.....	10
8. Insolvency vs. Global Sanctions: The CJ Shah & Co. vs. Flint Group Precedent	12
9. Lebanon-Israel Conflict 2026: Historical Drivers, Geopolitical Shifts, and the Path to Peace	13
10. Climate Adaptation in India: Scaling from National Policy to Grassroots Action.....	14
11. NGT Directive on Arsenic and Fluoride Contamination in Groundwater	16
12. The Telangana SREEPC Survey 2024: Moving Beyond Income-Centric Disadvantage	18



VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. Expansion of MSP Procurement: Focus on Chhattisgarh and Bihar

The Government of India has scaled up procurement under the **PM-AASHA** scheme, specifically targeting pulse self-sufficiency through the **Atmanirbhar Pulses Mission**. Key highlights include:

- **Strategic Shift in Bihar:** For the first time, a structured procurement of **Masoor (Lentil)** has been launched in Bihar, utilizing scientific storage via **WDR A-approved** warehouses to minimize post-harvest losses.
- **Infrastructure Strengthening:** The National Cooperative Consumers' Federation (NCCF) and NAFED have operationalized a vast network of **Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)** and Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) to bridge the gap between farm-gate and procurement centers.
- **Digital Transformation:** Chhattisgarh has integrated the **E-Samyukti portal** to digitize farmer registration, ensuring transparency and direct benefit transfers, effectively eliminating middleman interference.
- **Market Intervention:** By setting significant targets (e.g., 63,325 MT for Chana in Chhattisgarh), the government is providing a credible **Price Support Scheme (PSS)** to prevent distress sales during bumper harvests.
- **Institutional Synergy:** The collaborative model involving NCCF, NAFED, and the Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) demonstrates a multi-agency approach to food security and price stabilization.



Key Definitions

- **MSP (Minimum Support Price):** A "floor price" set by the government to protect farmers against excessive falls in price during bumper production years, based on recommendations by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).
- **PM-AASHA:** Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan, an umbrella scheme aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to farmers, comprising the Price Support Scheme (PSS), Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS), and Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPSS).
- **WDR A (Warehousing Development and Regulatory Authority):** A statutory body that implements the Negotiable Warehouse Receipt (NWR) system, allowing farmers to seek loans against stored produce.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **State List (Schedule VII):** Agriculture is primarily a State subject (Entry 14), but "Trade and commerce in, and the production, supply and distribution of foodstuffs" falls under the **Concurrent List (Entry 33)**, allowing Central intervention in procurement.
- **Article 39:** The State shall direct policy toward ensuring that the ownership and control of material resources are distributed to subserve the common good (economic justice for farmers).
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Provides the legal framework for the government to regulate the delivery and supply of essential foodgrains and pulses to maintain price stability.

Important Key Points for Prelims/Mains

- **Atmanirbhar Pulses Mission:** Aims to end import dependency by 2027 through technological interventions and assured procurement.



- **Nodal Agencies:** NAFED and NCCF act as central nodal agencies for pulse and oilseed procurement, moving beyond just wheat and paddy.
- **PACS Reform:** Converting PACS into multi-service centers is a key pillar of the "Sahakar-se-Samridhi" vision, as seen in the Chhattisgarh and Bihar models.

Conclusion

The organized procurement of pulses in Bihar and the digital expansion in Chhattisgarh represent a transition from "production-centric" to "income-centric" agricultural policy. By strengthening the cooperative framework and leveraging digital tools, the government is not only securing food reserves but also insulating small-holder farmers from market volatility, essential for achieving the goal of doubling farmers' income and national self-reliance.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; Issues arising out of their design and implementation.
- **GS Paper III:** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and Minimum Support Prices; Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; Issues of food security.

2. India's Paradigm Shift: Green Economy, Entrepreneurship, and the Role of Youth

- **Green Jobs and Entrepreneurship:** Renewable energy, electric mobility, and green fuels are emerging as primary drivers of the economy, creating large-scale employment for the youth through a low-carbon growth trajectory.
- **National Green Hydrogen Mission:** With an outlay of over ₹19,000 crore, this mission is decarbonizing hard-to-abate sectors like steel and cement, positioning India as a global leader in clean industrial transformation.
- **Technological Innovation and Scalability:** Grassroots innovations, such as converting conventional vehicles into electric ones, are making sustainability affordable; continuous innovation is essential as green technologies evolve rapidly.
- **Diversified Energy Frontier:** Beyond solar and wind, India is exploring untapped "Ocean Energy" and expanding nuclear power capacity through long-term targets and increased private sector participation.
- **Circular Economy and Biofuels:** Converting used cooking oil into biofuel and focusing on waste-to-wealth initiatives are identified as high-potential areas for new-age green entrepreneurs.
- **Research and Development (RDI) Fund:** A ₹1 lakh crore fund has been established to support startups and innovators in scaling sustainable solutions through a collaborative government-private funding model.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife.
- **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.
- **Article 21:** The Supreme Court has interpreted the Right to Life to include the right to a clean and healthy environment (e.g., M.C. Mehta cases).



- **Environment Protection Act, 1986:** Provides the framework for government coordination of activities of central and state authorities established under previous laws.

Key Definitions

- **Green Jobs:** Decent jobs that contribute to preserving or restoring the environment, be they in traditional sectors such as manufacturing and construction, or in new, emerging green sectors.
- **Circular Economy:** An economic system aimed at eliminating waste and the continual use of resources by reusing, sharing, repairing, refurbishing, remanufacturing, and recycling.
- **Lifestyle for Environment (LiFE):** An India-led global mass movement to nudge individual and community action to protect and preserve the environment.

Additional Key Points

- **Decarbonization:** India is focusing on reducing carbon intensity in industrial processes via green hydrogen and carbon capture technologies.
- **Resource Mobilization:** The transition requires significant capital; hence the focus on private sector participation in strategic domains like space and nuclear energy.

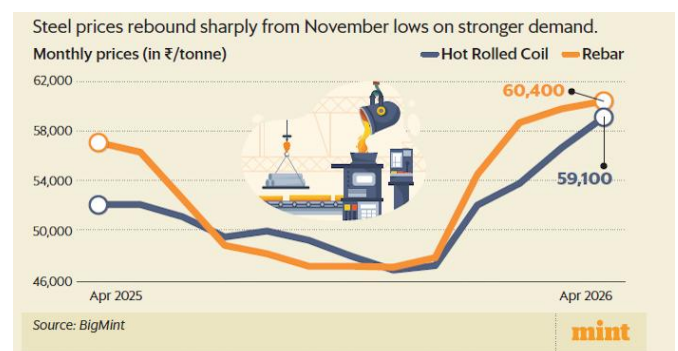
Conclusion: India's transition toward a Green Economy is not merely an environmental necessity but a strategic economic opportunity. By leveraging its demographic dividend and fostering a robust ecosystem for green entrepreneurship, India is effectively operationalizing the "LiFE" mission while ensuring long-term energy security and sustainable industrial growth.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** National Green Hydrogen Mission, LiFE Movement, RDI Fund details, and Constitutional Articles (48A, 51A).
- **Mains (GS Paper III):** Environmental conservation, Green growth, Employment/Employment generation, and Science & Technology (Renewable Energy/Nuclear Power).

3. Dynamics of Indian Steel Sector: Q4FY26 Performance and Future Outlook

- **Sharp Price Recovery:** Following multi-year lows in November 2025, steel prices witnessed a robust rebound in the March quarter (Q4FY26), with Hot-Rolled Coil (HRC) prices rising up to 21% and Rebar prices surging nearly 27% to recover from five-year lows.
- **Domestic Demand Drivers:** The surge was primarily triggered by a shortened construction window due to an extended monsoon the previous year, forcing rapid project execution and higher material absorption by the infrastructure and realty sectors.
- **Protectionist Measures and Import Control:** The imposition of safeguard duties at the end of 2025 effectively insulated domestic manufacturers from cheaper imports, particularly from China, granting Indian mills the pricing power to pass on increased coking coal costs to consumers.
- **Global Supply Tightening:** A slowdown in Chinese steel exports coupled with tighter global





supply chains contributed to firmer domestic market conditions, even as international factors like Europe's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) pose long-term export challenges.

- **Cyclicality of Demand:** Steel consumption in India follows a distinct seasonal pattern where the "monsoon effect" (June–September) typically disrupts construction activity, leading to a temporary softening of prices and demand for long products like rebar.
- **Near-Term Price Softening:** While pre-monsoon restocking and project deadlines may keep prices firm in the immediate term, analysts anticipate a rally fade starting mid-May 2026 as the building cycle slows down.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Seventh Schedule (Entry 23 & 54):** Regulation of mines and mineral development is shared between the Union and States. Steel, being a key industrial sector, falls under the administrative ambit of the Ministry of Steel.
- **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957:** The primary legal framework governing the mining sector, which provides the raw material base (iron ore) for the steel industry.
- **National Steel Policy (NSP) 2017:** A policy framework aiming to increase per capita steel consumption and achieve a crude steel capacity of 300 million tonnes by 2030-31.
- **Customs Tariff Act, 1975:** Utilized for imposing Safeguard Duties and Anti-Dumping Duties to protect the domestic steel industry from predatory pricing by foreign exporters.

Key Definitions

- **Hot-Rolled Coil (HRC):** Steel that has been roll-pressed at very high temperatures; it is used as a base material for various industrial applications, including pipes, tanks, and automotive parts.
- **Rebar (Reinforcing Bar):** A steel bar or mesh of steel wires used as a tension device in reinforced concrete and masonry structures to strengthen and aid the concrete under tension.
- **Safeguard Duty:** A temporary import restriction (tariff) imposed by a country when an import surge threatens to cause serious injury to its domestic industry.
- **Coking Coal:** A high-grade coal used in the blast furnace process of steelmaking to provide the carbon and heat necessary for iron ore reduction.

Additional Key Points

- **CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism):** This EU-led carbon tax on carbon-intensive imports (like steel) remains a looming challenge for Indian exporters, requiring a shift toward "Green Steel" production.
- **Infrastructure Push:** Sustained government spending on Gati Shakti and National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) acts as the primary cushion against global volatility in steel demand.

Conclusion: The Indian steel industry is currently benefiting from a domestic-led recovery cycle, shielded by proactive trade measures. However, the sector's resilience will depend on its ability to navigate seasonal demand fluctuations and adapt to global environmental regulations like CBAM by adopting cleaner technologies.



UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Concepts of Safeguard Duty, Anti-Dumping Duty, CBAM, and India's position in global steel production.
- **Mains (GS Paper III):** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, and growth; Infrastructure; Industrial Policy and its effects on industrial growth.

4. Strengthening Cyber Defenses in the Banking Sector: Addressing AI-Driven Threats

- **Priority on Cyber Resilience:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has directed Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) to prioritize the reinforcement of cyber defenses to counter "unprecedented" risks emerging from advanced Artificial Intelligence (AI) models.
- **Coordinated Institutional Mechanism:** The Indian Banks' Association (IBA) has been tasked with developing a unified framework to ensure a swift, multi-institutional response to digital threats, moving away from fragmented security silos.
- **Real-Time Threat Intelligence:** A mandate for a robust, real-time intelligence-sharing mechanism among banks, the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In), and other agencies has been issued to ensure early identification of vulnerabilities.
- **Expert Engagement:** Banks are advised to move beyond standard protocols by engaging specialized cybersecurity agencies and top-tier professionals to audit and monitor IT systems continuously.
- **Data and Monetary Security:** Emphasis is placed on pre-emptive measures to safeguard customer data and monetary resources, specifically targeting threats linked to sophisticated AI models like Anthropic's Mythos.
- **Mandatory Incident Reporting:** Financial institutions must immediately report suspicious activities or cyber incidents to relevant authorities to maintain a transparent and secure financial ecosystem.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** The primary law in India dealing with cybercrime and electronic commerce; Section 70B mandates the operation of CERT-In as the national nodal agency for cyber incident response.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023:** Provides the legal framework for processing digital personal data, imposing significant obligations on "Data Fiduciary" entities like banks to prevent data breaches.
- **RBI Cyber Security Framework:** A set of comprehensive guidelines issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) specifically for commercial banks to manage cyber risks and ensure business continuity.
- **Article 21:** The Supreme Court has recognized the "Right to Privacy" as a fundamental right, which includes the protection of personal financial data from digital unauthorized access.



Key Definitions

- **Cyber Defense:** A computer network defense mechanism which includes response to actions and critical infrastructure protection and information assurance for organizations.
- **AI-Driven Cyber Threats:** Attacks that use machine learning or AI models to automate the discovery of vulnerabilities, create highly convincing phishing content (deepfakes), or bypass traditional security filters.



- **CERT-In (Indian Computer Emergency Response Team):** An office within the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) that deals with cybersecurity threats like hacking and phishing.
- **Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs):** Banks which are included in the Second Schedule of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934, and are subject to stringent regulatory oversight.

Additional Key Points

- **Mythos AI Risk:** The meeting specifically highlighted emerging risks from sophisticated models like Anthropic's Mythos, which could potentially be exploited for high-level financial fraud.
- **Pre-emptive Vigilance:** The shift in strategy focuses on "pre-emptive" action rather than "reactive" responses, emphasizing the hardening of IT architecture before a breach occurs.

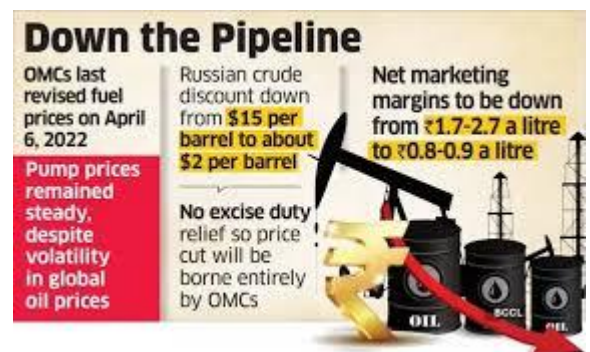
Conclusion: The integration of AI into the cyber-threat landscape marks a paradigm shift in financial security. India's proactive stance, led by the Finance Ministry, underscores the necessity of a "whole-of-ecosystem" approach where technology, specialized human expertise, and regulatory agility converge to protect the integrity of the national economy.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Roles of CERT-In, IBA, and RBI; key features of the IT Act, 2000 and DPDP Act, 2023.
- **Mains (GS Paper III):** Internal Security (Cybersecurity challenges); Science and Technology (Applications and threats of AI); Indian Economy (Banking sector stability and digitalization).

5. Fuel Pricing Dynamics and Under-Recoveries: Impact of Global Volatility on OMCs

- **Under-Recovery Crisis:** State-run Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) are currently incurring significant "under-recoveries," losing approximately ₹20 per litre on petrol and ₹100 per litre on diesel due to the mismatch between high international crude costs and stagnant domestic retail prices.
- **Crude Oil Volatility:** The Indian Crude Basket price has surged from an average of \$70 per barrel last year to over \$113 per barrel in April 2026, driven largely by geopolitical tensions in West Asia, including the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Fiscal Intervention:** To shield consumers from inflationary pressures, the Union Government reduced excise duty on petrol and diesel by ₹10 per litre in March 2026, effectively absorbing a portion of the price volatility rather than passing it to the end-user.
- **Impact on Current Account Deficit (CAD):** As India imports nearly 90% of its oil requirements, every \$1 per barrel increase in crude prices adds roughly ₹16,000 crore to the annual import bill, directly straining the trade balance and CAD.
- **OMC Profitability Cycles:** While currently facing losses, OMCs previously accumulated substantial profits (over ₹34,000 crore in H1 FY26) when global prices were subdued (\$60-70 range), allowing for a cross-subsidization buffer during high-price cycles.
- **Geopolitical Supply Constraints:** Supply chains are severely constrained by the naval blockades in Iranian ports and the Strait of Hormuz, a channel that traditionally facilitates the transit of 20% of global oil and gas supplies.





Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 265:** No tax shall be levied or collected except by authority of law. Excise duty adjustments on petroleum products are made through the Finance Act and subsequent notifications.
- **Seventh Schedule (Union List - Entry 53 & 84):** The Central Government has the power to regulate petroleum and petroleum products and levy excise duty on them (excluding those brought under GST).
- **GST Council Scope:** Under Article 279A, petroleum crude, high-speed diesel, and motor spirit (petrol) are constitutionally part of GST but will only be levied from a date recommended by the GST Council; currently, they remain under the VAT and Excise regime.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1954:** Empowers the government to regulate the production, supply, and distribution of petroleum products to ensure availability at fair prices.

Key Definitions

- **Under-Recovery:** The difference between the cost of refining and distributing fuel (based on international benchmarks) and the actual price at which OMCs sell the product at the pump.
- **Indian Crude Basket:** A weighted average of Sour grade (Oman & Dubai average) and Sweet grade (Brent) crude oil, representing the typical quality of crude processed by Indian refineries.
- **Excise Duty:** An indirect tax levied by the Central Government on the manufacture or production of goods within the country.
- **Strait of Hormuz:** A strategic chokepoint between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman; it is the world's most important oil transit channel.

Additional Key Points

- **Differential Pricing:** While regular fuel prices remain stagnant, OMCs have increased rates for premium fuels and industrial/bulk diesel (purchased by agriculture and heavy industries) to partially offset losses.
- **Private vs. Public Retail:** Private retailers (e.g., Nayara, Shell) have already hiked prices to align with market realities, unlike state-run OMCs which are following a price-stabilization mandate.

Conclusion: The current fuel pricing scenario highlights the delicate balance between fiscal stability and social welfare. While excise duty cuts provide immediate relief to consumers and check inflation, the mounting under-recoveries of OMCs and the widening import bill necessitate a long-term strategy focused on energy diversification and reducing import dependency.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Concepts of Under-recovery, Indian Crude Basket, Excise Duty vs. GST, and Geography of West Asian chokepoints (Strait of Hormuz).
- **Mains (GS Paper III):** Indian Economy (Inflation management, CAD, Fiscal Policy); Infrastructure (Energy sector); and Security (Geopolitical impact on energy supply chains).



6. India-Africa Partnership: Elevating South-South Cooperation in the Global South

- **Centrality of Africa:** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar emphasized that Africa occupies a "central place" in India's foreign policy, highlighting a shift from peripheral engagement to a strategic, principled partnership based on equality and mutual respect.
- **India-Africa Forum Summit-IV (IAFS-IV):** The unveiling of the logo and theme for the upcoming summit underscores the formal institutionalization of ties, aiming to consolidate the progress made since the previous summit in 2015.
- **Developmental Partnership Model:** India's engagement is distinctively guided by the "Kampala Principles" (2018), focusing on local capacity building, infrastructure development through Lines of Credit (LoCs), and digital public infrastructure (DPI) rather than debt-heavy models.
- **Voice of the Global South:** India played a pivotal role in the African Union's (AU) permanent membership in the G20 during its presidency, advocating for a more inclusive global governance architecture that reflects African aspirations.
- **Strategic Security Cooperation:** Beyond trade, India is strengthening maritime security ties in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) through the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative and various defense training programs with African nations.
- **Human-Centric Globalization:** The partnership focuses on "Shared Progress," targeting food security, healthcare (the "Pharmacy of the World" role), and climate resilience through the International Solar Alliance (ISA).



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (DPSP):** Directs the State to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations, providing the constitutional basis for India's proactive foreign policy.
- **Guiding Principles for Africa (2018):** Ten principles enunciated by the Prime Minister in Uganda, focusing on African priorities, trade liberalization, and collective action against terrorism and climate change.
- **Maritime Zones Act, 1976:** Governs India's maritime boundaries and interests, essential for security cooperation with East African littoral states under the IOR framework.
- **The African Union (AU) Statutes:** India's engagement is increasingly aligned with the AU's "Agenda 2063," which is the continent's blueprint for transforming Africa into a global powerhouse.

Key Definitions

- **South-South Cooperation:** A framework for collaboration among developing countries in the Global South to share knowledge, skills, and resources to achieve sustainable development.
- **Lines of Credit (LoC):** A development assistance tool where the Indian government provides concessional loans to African nations for infrastructure and development projects.
- **Global South:** A term used to describe developing, emerging, or lower-income economies, often in the Southern Hemisphere, emphasizing shared colonial histories and developmental challenges.
- **Capacity Building:** The process of developing and strengthening the skills, instincts, and resources that communities and nations need to survive and thrive in a fast-changing world.



Additional Key Points

- **Digital Outreach:** Initiatives like the e-VidyaBharti and e-ArogyaBharti (e-VBAB) Network Project provide tele-education and tele-medicine to thousands of African students and doctors.
- **Trade Dynamics:** India is one of Africa's top five trading partners and a significant investor, with interests ranging from energy and mining to telecommunications and agriculture.

Conclusion: India's relationship with Africa has transitioned from a historical, anti-colonial bond to a modern, strategic partnership. By championing Africa's inclusion in global platforms like the G20 and offering a non-prescriptive development model, India is cementing its role as a reliable ally in the "African Century."

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** IAFS Summits, Kampala Principles, African Union membership in G20, and location of key African strategic ports/regions.
- **Mains (GS Paper II):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

7. Unified Drug Regulatory System: India's Digital Leap for Global Quality Standards

- **Digital Drug Regulatory System (DDRS):** The Centre is proposing a single, integrated digital platform designed as Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) to streamline drug regulation across both Central and State authorities.
- **Database Integration:** The DDRS will interface with 21 national databases—including tax (GSTN), identity (UIDAI), and corporate registries—to ensure a seamless, "single source of truth" for the pharmaceutical lifecycle.
- **End-to-End Traceability:** The system facilitates the lifecycle tracking of regulated products, covering standardized approvals, real-time coordination, and certifications for drugs, Ayush, medical devices, and veterinary products.
- **Overcoming Regulatory Dualism:** By bridging the gap between the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) and State Drug Regulatory Authorities, the platform aims to eliminate non-uniform enforcement of quality standards.
- **Global Reputation Management:** As the provider of 20% of global generics and 60% of vaccines, India seeks this reform to counter challenges like spurious drugs and to align domestic regulations with international benchmarks.
- **Implementation Challenges:** Despite its potential for transparency, experts cite concerns regarding chronic manpower shortages in states, complex database integration, and the need for a phased onboarding strategy.





Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Concurrent List (Entry 19):** "Drugs and poisons" fall under the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule, allowing both Centre and States to legislate, which often leads to the current fragmented regulatory landscape.
- **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940:** The primary legislation governing the import, manufacture, distribution, and sale of drugs. The DDRS aims to digitize the enforcement of rules under this Act.
- **National Health Policy, 2017:** Advocates for strengthening the regulatory mechanism for drugs and devices and ensuring the digital integration of health services.
- **Article 47 (DPSP):** Mandates the State to regard the improvement of public health as among its primary duties, providing the moral basis for ensuring the quality of medicines.

Key Definitions

- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** A digital framework (like Aadhaar or UPI) that enables the provision of essential society-wide services through open, interoperable, and scalable systems.
- **Under-Recovery/Regulatory Gap:** In this context, it refers to the discrepancy in quality enforcement and inspection standards between different state jurisdictions.
- **Generic Medicines:** Medications created to be the same as an already marketed brand-name drug in dosage form, safety, strength, route of administration, and quality.
- **Spurious Drugs:** Drugs which are deliberately and fraudulently mislabeled with respect to identity and/or source to deceive the consumer.

Additional Key Points

- **Capacity Building:** The Ministry of Health has sought views on "change management" to train state-level regulators for the transition to a high-tech digital environment.
- **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) Synergy:** The DDRS is expected to complement the broader digital health ecosystem by ensuring that the medicines prescribed in digital health records are verified and safe.

Conclusion: The proposed Digital Drug Regulatory System represents a paradigm shift from a fragmented "command and control" model to a transparent "data-driven" oversight mechanism. While the scale of integration is ambitious, its successful execution is vital for India to maintain its status as the "Pharmacy of the World" and ensure the highest safety standards for its citizens.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** CDSCO, DCGI, Concurrent List provisions, and features of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).
- **Mains (GS Paper II):** Governance; Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health; E-governance applications and models.
- **Mains (GS Paper III):** Science and Technology-developments and their applications; Issues related to Intellectual Property Rights and the Pharmaceutical Industry.



8. Insolvency vs. Global Sanctions: The CJ Shah & Co. vs. Flint Group Precedent

- **Core Legal Conflict:** The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) is examining whether Indian companies can legitimately withhold payments to suppliers placed under foreign sanctions, specifically the US Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) list.
- **NCLT Ruling on Sovereignty:** The NCLT Ahmedabad held that unilateral foreign sanctions do not provide a valid legal defense for non-payment in domestic contracts, as such sanctions lack automatic legal force in India unless recognized by domestic law or the United Nations.
- **The "Compliance Paradox":** Global entities face a dilemma: fulfilling domestic payment obligations under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) may lead to severe penalties and secondary sanctions in foreign jurisdictions (like the US), while withholding payment risks insolvency proceedings in India.
- **Nature of the Transaction:** The tribunal emphasized that the dispute involved two Indian entities, transactions in Indian Rupees (INR), and governance under Indian Law, ruling that a "fear of foreign consequences" does not constitute "legal impossibility."
- **Interim Relief and Precedent:** The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has stayed the NCLT order, clarifying that it should not be treated as a precedent until the appeal is decided, highlighting the sensitivity of the "Legal Grey Zone."
- **Impact on Indian Businesses:** With more Indian firms being added to US sanctions lists (e.g., for Iran-linked trade), the final verdict will redefine how the IBC handles "bona fide" disputes involving international trade restrictive measures.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (DPSP):** Directs the State to promote international peace and respect for international law and treaty obligations; however, India traditionally recognizes only UN-mandated sanctions.
- **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016:** Specifically Section 9, which allows "Operational Creditors" to initiate insolvency if there is a default in payment and no "pre-existing dispute."
- **Indian Contract Act, 1872 (Section 56):** Deals with the "Doctrine of Frustration" and "Legal Impossibility," where a contract becomes void if an act becomes impossible or unlawful to perform.
- **United Nations (Security Council) Act, 1947:** The enabling Indian legislation that allows the government to apply sanctions strictly mandated by the UN Security Council.

Key Definitions

- **OFAC (Office of Foreign Assets Control):** An agency of the US Treasury Department that administers and enforces economic and trade sanctions based on US foreign policy.
- **Unilateral Sanctions:** Economic measures taken by a single country against another entity or state without the mandate of an international body like the UN.
- **Operational Creditor:** An entity to whom an operational debt is owed (e.g., suppliers of goods or services).
- **NCLT & NCLAT:** The National Company Law Tribunal (quasi-judicial body for corporate disputes) and its Appellate version (NCLAT) which hears appeals against NCLT orders.



Additional Key Points

- **Secondary Sanctions:** These target non-US persons for engaging in certain transactions with sanctioned entities, effectively forcing global companies to choose between the US financial system and the sanctioned party.
- **Diplomatic Stand:** The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) maintains a consistent stance that India does not subscribe to unilateral sanctions, a position the NCLT used to justify its ruling.

Conclusion: The CJ Shah vs. Flint Group case represents a critical intersection of private commercial law and public international law. While the NCLT's stance upholds India's legal sovereignty and the sanctity of the IBC, it places Indian subsidiaries of global firms in a precarious position. The appellate decision will be a landmark in determining if "foreign regulatory risk" qualifies as a "pre-existing dispute" under Indian insolvency law.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Powers of NCLT/NCLAT, basics of the IBC 2016, and the role of OFAC vs. UN Sanctions.
- **Mains (GS Paper II):** Effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's interests; Indian Judiciary and quasi-judicial bodies.
- **Mains (GS Paper III):** Indian Economy (Insolvency and Bankruptcy); Internal Security (Money laundering and global trade networks).

9. Lebanon-Israel Conflict 2026: Historical Drivers, Geopolitical Shifts, and the Path to Peace

- **Decoupling from the Iranian Imbroglio:** While the 2026 conflict (Operation Epic Fury) is linked to broader Iran-Israel tensions, the Lebanon crisis has distinct historical roots dating back to 1948, involving Palestinian refugees and the subsequent rise of the Hezbollah militia.
- **Decline of Hezbollah's Dominance:** Following the decapitation of its leadership (including Hassan Nasrallah) in late 2024 and the loss of its Syrian land bridge, Hezbollah has transitioned from a proto-army back to a decentralized guerrilla force, facing increasing domestic pressure to disarm.
- **Shift in Lebanese Domestic Politics:** A significant political hiatus ended with the election of a Hezbollah-agnostic President and Prime Minister, signaling a national desire to move away from being a "springboard for foreign causes" and toward sovereign stability.
- **The Washington Process:** Facilitated by the U.S., the direct engagement between Israeli and Lebanese ambassadors in April 2026 marks the first formal diplomatic contact in decades, hiving off the Lebanese peace process from stalled Iran-U.S. negotiations.
- **Humanitarian and Economic Toll:** The conflict has left Lebanon in a state of "accumulated crisis," with 5,282 dead, 1.2 million displaced, and 35% of the population living below the poverty line by early 2026, totaling \$8.5 billion in financial losses.
- **Confessional Fragility:** Lebanon remains a unique multi-ethnic state; however, its fragmented religious demographic (Christian, Shia, Sunni) makes it susceptible to civil war if the disarming of Hezbollah is handled without regional assurances.





Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **The Taif Agreement (1989):** The national reconciliation pact that ended the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) and mandated the disarmament of all national and non-national militias (a provision still unfulfilled by Hezbollah).
- **UN Security Council Resolution 1701:** Established after the 2006 war, it calls for the disarmament of all armed groups in Lebanon and stipulates that no weapons or authority should exist other than that of the Lebanese State south of the Litani River.
- **Article 51 of the UN Charter:** Pertains to the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs, often cited by both the IDF and Hezbollah to justify military operations.

Key Definitions

- **Axis of Resistance:** An informal geopolitical and military coalition led by Iran, including the Syrian government, Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthi movement, aimed at countering Western and Israeli influence.
- **Confessionalism:** A system of government that proportionally mixes politics and religion, distributing legislative and executive power among different religious communities (confessions).
- **Litani River:** A strategic water body in southern Lebanon; the area south of this river is frequently the site of "buffer zones" and is central to UN monitoring.

Additional Key Points

- **The "Abraham Accords" Expansion:** There is speculation that the U.S. aims to include Lebanon in the Abraham Accords framework to formalize peace between Arab nations and Israel.
- **Intelligence Penetration:** The 2024-2026 conflict was characterized by unprecedented intelligence operations, including the strategic detonation of communication devices (pagers/walkie-talkies) to neutralize militia cadres.

Conclusion Lebanon stands at a critical crossroads where its historical role as a "civilizational bridge" is pitted against decades of proxy warfare. The current Washington-led talks offer a rare opportunity to disconnect Lebanon's fate from Iranian strategic interests, provided the international community can balance Israel's security demands with Lebanon's internal ethnic stability.

UPSC Relevance

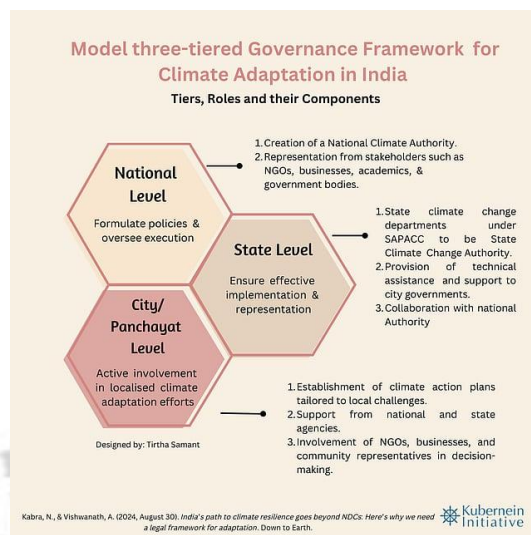
- **Prelims:** Locations of Litani River, Golan Heights, and 79-km border; UN Resolution 1701; Abraham Accords.
- **Mains (GS Paper II):** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests (West Asia crisis); Indian Diaspora (Lebanese-Indian connections); International Institutions (UNSC role).
- **Mains (GS Paper III):** Security challenges and their management in border areas; role of non-state actors (Hezbollah) in regional security.

10. Climate Adaptation in India: Scaling from National Policy to Grassroots Action

- **Vulnerability and Impact:** India is the world's ninth most climate-vulnerable country, suffering \$170 billion in losses from 430 extreme weather events between 1995 and 2024, impacting approximately 1.3 billion people.



- **NDC and Global Alignment:** The updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for 2031–35 prioritize mainstreaming climate resilience and coastal protection, aligning with COP30's Belém Adaptation Indicators and the global goal to triple adaptation finance by 2035.
- **Institutional Models:** Successful initiatives like ICAR's National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) and Tamil Nadu's Climate Resilient Villages (CRV) serve as holistic blueprints for water management, renewable energy, and community-led biodiversity conservation.
- **The Financing Gap:** Despite spending 5.6% of GDP on resilience in FY22, India faces a skewed budget toward mitigation; domestic resource mobilization is hindered by the lack of a clear "adaptation taxonomy" in the 2025 Draft Framework.
- **Decentralized Governance:** Effective adaptation requires moving beyond "scattered efforts" to institutionalize climate budgeting at state and district levels, mandating SAPCC (State Action Plan on Climate Change) revisions aligned with 2030-35 goals.
- **Locally Led Adaptation (LLA):** Resilience planning must transition to a "whole-of-systems" approach, empowering Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies to lead context-specific, needs-based interventions through community ownership.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Mandates the State 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.
- **11th and 12th Schedules:** Envisage the role of Panchayats and Municipalities in environmental protection and social forestry, providing the legal basis for Locally Led Adaptation (LLA).
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Provides the institutional framework for disaster preparedness, which is increasingly becoming inseparable from climate change adaptation.

Key Definitions

- **Adaptation vs. Mitigation:** Mitigation involves reducing the causes of climate change (emissions), while Adaptation involves adjusting to the actual or expected future climate to minimize damage.
- **Climate Finance Taxonomy:** A classification system that defines which economic activities are "environmentally sustainable," helping investors and policymakers direct funds toward resilience.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for Climate:** Using data-driven systems for real-time monitoring of weather patterns and disseminating climate information to the last mile.
- **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs):** Non-binding national plans highlighting climate actions, including targets for greenhouse gas emission reductions, under the Paris Agreement.



Additional Key Points

- **Economic Return:** A World Resources Institute (WRI) study estimates a ten-fold return on adaptation investments, underscoring that avoidable losses outweigh the cost of resilient infrastructure.
- **Mainstreaming Resilience:** The Union Budget 2026–27 is urged to adopt "climate budgeting" to track adaptation spending across departments like agriculture, water resources, and urban development.

Conclusion: India's climate strategy is undergoing a shift from emission-centric mitigation to a more balanced focus on survival and resilience. While policy frameworks like the NDCs provide a roadmap, the success of India's climate mission depends on bridging the financing gap and translating high-level commitments into bankable, locally-led projects that safeguard the livelihoods of the most vulnerable.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** NICRA, TNCCM, COP30 (Belém Indicators), UNEP Adaptation Gap Report, and Constitutional Articles 48A/51A(g).
- **Mains (GS Paper III):** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment; Disaster and disaster management.
- **Mains (GS Paper II):** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services.

11. NGT Directive on Arsenic and Fluoride Contamination in Groundwater

- **Judicial Intervention:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT), acting *suo motu*, has directed all 28 State governments to implement urgent mitigation measures against arsenic and fluoride contamination in groundwater, impleading them based on grave environmental reports.
- **Health Hazards:** Chronic arsenic exposure leads to "arsenicosis," characterized by skin lesions, abnormal pigmentation, and cancer, while excessive fluoride intake results in skeletal and dental fluorosis, severely affecting bone and teeth health.
- **Geographical Spread:** Contamination is widespread, with arsenic predominantly found in eastern (Bihar, West Bengal) and south-eastern regions, while fluoride is highly prevalent in central, eastern, and parts of southern and western India.
- **Administrative Accountability:** The NGT has instructed the Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) to monitor mitigation efforts nationwide and ensure that remedial actions, such as water filtration and reverse osmosis, are effectively executed.
- **State Progress Reports:** States like Bihar have installed removal plants in thousands of wards, West Bengal is utilizing community water purification plants, and Uttar Pradesh is leveraging the "Jal Jeevan Mission" to provide piped water to over 80% of households.
- **Remedial Framework:** The CGWA has recommended high-tech solutions including ion-exchange processes, water filtration plants, and reverse osmosis (RO) to treat contaminated water at the source before human consumption.





Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The Right to Life has been interpreted by the Judiciary to include the right to clean drinking water as a fundamental necessity for human existence.
- **Article 47 (DPSP):** Mandates that the State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties.
- **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010:** Established the NGT for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- **The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Provides the legal umbrella for the Central Government to take measures to protect and improve environmental quality and prevent environmental pollution.

Key Definitions

- **Suo Motu:** A Latin term meaning "on its own motion," referring to a situation where a court or tribunal takes up a case without a formal petition being filed by a party.
- **Arsenicosis:** A chronic health condition caused by long-term ingestion of arsenic, often through contaminated drinking water, leading to multi-organ failure and skin malignancies.
- **Ion-Exchange Process:** A chemical process used in water treatment where undesirable dissolved ions are replaced by other ions with a similar charge.
- **Reverse Osmosis (RO):** A water purification process that uses a partially permeable membrane to remove ions, unwanted molecules, and larger particles from drinking water.

Additional Key Points

- **Data Transparency:** The NGT has directed states to submit granular data on contamination levels down to the village and block levels to create a comprehensive national map.
- **Centrally Sponsored Schemes:** The Jal Jeevan Mission is a critical vehicle for mitigation, aiming to provide Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) to every rural household by ensuring water quality standards.

Conclusion: The NGT's directive underscores the transition from mere monitoring to active judicial enforcement of environmental safety. Given that groundwater is the primary source of drinking water for a vast majority of Indians, addressing chemical contamination is not just an environmental goal but a critical public health emergency that requires seamless Centre-State coordination.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** NGT jurisdiction, CGWA functions, Jal Jeevan Mission targets, and chemical properties of Arsenic/Fluoride.
- **Mains (GS Paper II):** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies; Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.
- **Mains (GS Paper III):** Environmental pollution and degradation; Conservation; Issues related to water security and public health.



12. The Telangana SREEPC Survey 2024: Moving Beyond Income-Centric Disadvantage

- **Shift in Metric:** The Telangana Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political and Caste (SREEPC) Survey 2024 marks a paradigm shift by using caste, rather than just income, as the primary lens to measure structural disadvantage in India.
- **The Composite Backwardness Index (CBI):** Utilizing a rigorous multidimensional metric (covering education, assets, and social integration), the survey reveals that Scheduled Castes (SCs) score 96/100 on backwardness, compared to 31/100 for General Castes (GCs).
- **Heterogeneity within Categories:** The report debunked the "monolith" myth, showing significant internal diversity within Backward Classes (BCs). It notes that 135 distinct castes (67% of the population) score above the state backwardness average.
- **Urban-Rural Chasm:** While urbanization improves absolute outcomes, the relative gap persists; SC/ST households in cities remain concentrated in informal settlements with amenities barely superior to rural slums.
- **Educational Bottlenecks:** The survey highlights that tribal communities (STs) face higher educational backwardness than SCs due to geographic and cultural isolation, demanding targeted rather than generic interventions.
- **Growth vs. Equity:** Despite Telangana being a fast-growing state, the survey proves that economic growth does not automatically bridge caste inequality, as structural exclusion remains embedded in labor markets and social systems.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 15(4) & 15(5):** Empower the State to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for SCs and STs.
- **Article 16(4):** Provides for the reservation of appointments or posts in favor of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.
- **Article 340:** Authorizes the President to appoint a Commission to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes and make recommendations.
- **Article 46 (DPSP):** Mandates the State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, particularly SCs and STs.

Key Definitions

- **Composite Backwardness Index (CBI):** A multi-factor scale used to quantify deprivation across socio-economic, educational, and political dimensions rather than relying solely on monetary wealth.
- **Structural Exclusion:** A situation where certain groups are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities, or resources that are normally available to members of a different group, often enforced by social hierarchy.
- **Occupational Segmentation:** The phenomenon where specific castes remain locked into traditional or low-paying labor sectors due to lack of social capital and quality education.
- **General Caste (GC):** A social category typically consisting of groups that do not qualify for affirmative action (reservations) based on historical social or educational backwardness.



Additional Key Points

- **Education over Enrollment:** The report shifts the focus from mere school "access" to "learning outcomes," arguing that functional, high-quality government schools are the only way to break the cycle of backwardness.
- **Survey Scale:** Covering 97% of the state's population (35 million people), this is one of the largest cross-sectional, census-scale enumerations conducted in independent India.

Conclusion: The SEEEPC Survey 2024 serves as a crucial data-driven rebuke to income-only welfare targeting. It demonstrates that in the Indian context, caste is a multidimensional trap that economic growth alone cannot spring. Bridging this "exponential gap" requires policy interventions that are as granular and caste-sensitive as the data itself.

UPSC Relevance

- **Prelims:** Article 15, 16, 340; Concepts like CBI and multidimensional poverty; Role of IIPS and caste-based surveys in India.
- **Mains (GS Paper I):** Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India; Role of caste in social hierarchy and mobilization.
- **Mains (GS Paper II):** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education and Human Resources.



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