



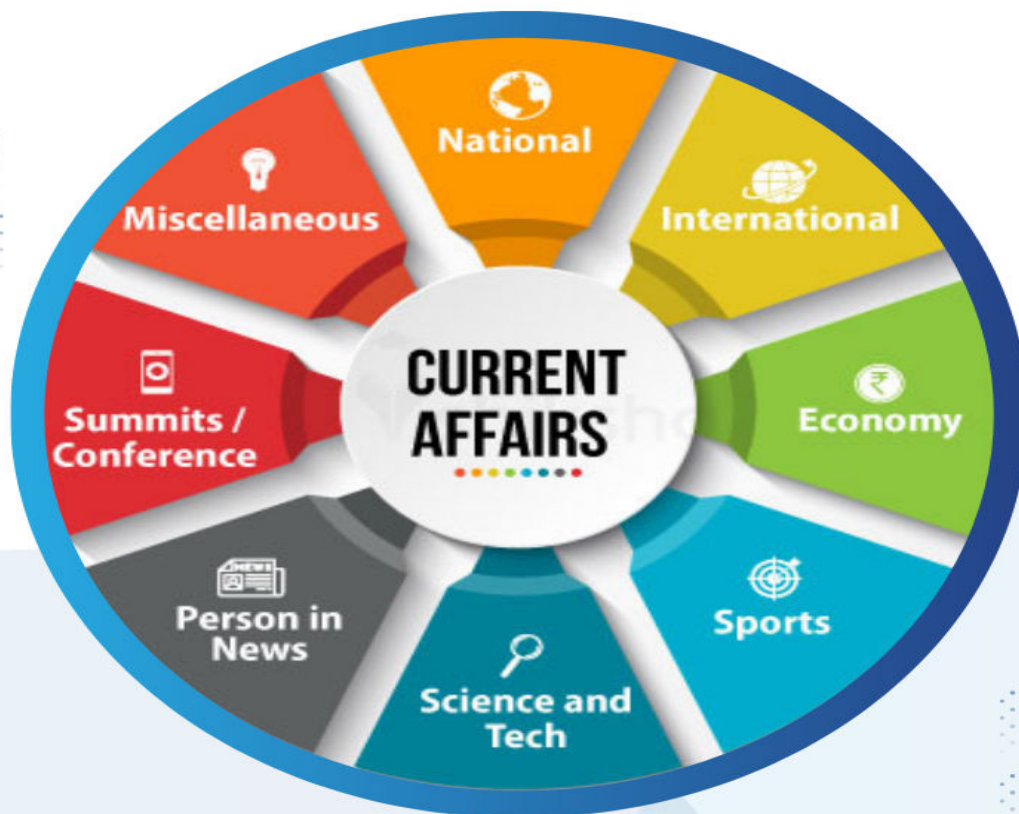
“ We help you reach for the star ”

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

## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS**

**FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION**

**DATE: 25/04/2026 (SATURDAY)**



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VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



## 1. Inter-Ethnic Volatility in Manipur: Kuki-Naga Conflict Dynamics

The recent escalation of violence in Manipur's Ukhrul district, resulting in three fatalities, marks a significant shift in the state's security landscape. Traditionally centered on the Meitei-Kuki divide in the Imphal Valley, the conflict has now permeated the hill districts, reigniting historical tensions between the Kuki and Tangkhul Naga communities.

### Key Highlights of the Ukhrul Escalation

- **Geographic Shift of Violence:** The conflict has migrated from the Meitei-dominated valley to the Naga-dominated Ukhrul district, complicating the state's internal security matrix.
- **Casualty Demographics:** The violence claimed the lives of two Kuki village volunteers and one Tangkhul Naga volunteer, illustrating the active role of "village guards" in local defense.
- **The "Self-Defense" Narrative:** Both communities have justified the use of licensed hunting arms and organized patrolling under the banner of "lawful right to self-defense" against perceived incursions.
- **Role of Armed Groups:** Allegations involve Kuki armed cadres under the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement, raising questions about the efficacy of ceasefire monitoring.
- **Chain of Retaliation:** The current flare-up is traced back to an assault case on February 7, suggesting that localized interpersonal disputes are rapidly metamorphosing into communal warfare.
- **State Intervention:** While the state leadership has initiated visits to bridge the "trust deficit," the ground reality remains volatile with reports of torched houses and highway ambushes.



### Essential Terminology for Examination

- **Suspension of Operations (SoO):** A tripartite agreement signed in 2008 between the Government of India, the Government of Manipur, and Kuki insurgent groups (represented by UPF and KNO) to cease hostilities and initiate political dialogue.
- **Buffer Zones:** Strategically monitored areas between competing ethnic settlements intended to prevent direct physical contact between armed volunteers of opposing sides.
- **Village Volunteers:** Local community members who take up arms (often licensed or improvised) to guard their settlements in the absence of perceived state protection.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 355:** Directs the Union to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance; its invocation in Manipur underscores the severity of the law and order breakdown.
- **Sixth Schedule:** While Manipur is not a Sixth Schedule state in its entirety, Article 371C provides for a "Hill Areas Committee" to safeguard the interests of the tribal populations in the hill districts.
- **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA):** Continues to be a focal point of debate, as its application is often extended or withdrawn in pockets based on the prevailing security assessment of "disturbed areas."
- **Inner Line Permit (ILP):** Regulates the entry of outsiders into Manipur under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, aimed at protecting indigenous demographics.



## Structural Conclusion

The transition of conflict from the valley-hill divide to inter-tribal friction within the hills (Kuki vs. Naga) indicates a dangerous fragmentation of social cohesion in Manipur. The involvement of groups under the SoO pact highlights a critical lapse in ceasefire oversight. For lasting peace, the state must transition from reactive policing to proactive mediation, addressing the historical land-tenure anxieties and ethnic boundaries that underpin these recurring skirmishes.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Federalism, Constitutional provisions for tribal areas (Art. 371C), and the role of the State vs. Union in maintaining internal security (Art. 355).
- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security challenges, role of non-state actors, insurgency in the Northeast, and the impact of ceasefire agreements (SoO) on regional stability.

## 2. Sub-Classification of Scheduled Castes (SC) Quota in Karnataka

In a significant move toward targeted social justice, the Karnataka Cabinet has approved a new internal reservation matrix within the 15% SC quota. This decision aims to address the long-standing grievance that benefits of reservation have been disproportionately accessed by a few relatively advanced sub-castes, leaving the most marginalized communities behind.

### Key Highlights of the Cabinet Decision

- **Internal Reservation Matrix:** The 15% SC quota is now divided into three specific categories: **5.25%** for Category 1 (Dalit Left/Madigas), **5.25%** for Category 2 (Dalit Right/Holeyas), and **4.5%** for Category 3 (Touchables and Nomadic groups).
- **Targeted Focus on Nomads:** Within the 4.5% share for Category 3, the government has mandated a **1:5 roster rule**, ensuring that every fifth post is reserved specifically for the 59 nomadic (Alemari) communities.
- **Immediate Recruitment Impact:** The decision unfreezes the recruitment process for approximately **56,432 government posts** that were stalled due to legal and administrative ambiguities regarding internal quotas.
- **Adherence to 50% Ceiling:** To avoid immediate legal rejection, the government reverted to the **15% SC and 3% ST** quota (total 18%) instead of the previously hiked 17%:7% (total 24%), which had pushed total state reservations to 56%.
- **Empirical Basis:** The formula is based on the recommendations of the **Justice Nagamohan Das Commission** and a technical committee report, providing the necessary "quantifiable data" required by the judiciary.
- **Political Commitment:** The move fulfills a key electoral promise from the 2023 manifesto, aimed at building consensus among the 101 diverse sub-castes within the SC umbrella.

### 'UNEQUALS CAN'T BE TREATED EQUALLY'

➤ **Justice B R Gavai**, the lone Dalit on the 7-judge bench, said the **child of a Scheduled Caste IAS/IPS or civil service officer cannot be equated with the child of a poor SC person** studying in a gram panchayat/zila parishad school

➤ He said opposition to sub-classification is like the tussle in a train's general compartment. 'Firstly, persons outside...struggled to get into the general compartment. However, **once**

**they get inside it, they make every attempt possible to prevent persons outside... from entering it'**

➤ In her dissenting verdict, **Justice Bela Trivedi** said the Scheduled Castes are a 'homogeneous class', '**cannot be tinkered with by states'**

➤ She said **states cannot enact law to provide quota or give preferential treatment** to a particular caste by sub-dividing SCs. Only Parliament can



## Essential Terminology for Examination

- **Sub-classification:** The process of categorizing a protected group (like SCs) into smaller sub-groups based on varying levels of backwardness to ensure equitable distribution of benefits.
- **Dalit Left vs. Dalit Right:** A socio-political classification in South India; "Left" (e.g., Madigas) are traditionally considered more marginalized, while "Right" (e.g., Holeyas) are often viewed as having slightly better socio-economic integration.
- **Intelligible Differentia:** A legal principle requiring that any classification made by the state must be based on a clear, logical distinction that justifies different treatment.

## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 341:** Empowers the President to specify castes as Scheduled Castes. The 2024 Supreme Court ruling clarified that State sub-classification does not tinker with this "Presidential List" but only manages the "proportions" of reservation.
- **Article 16(4):** Enables the State to provide reservations in appointments if a backward class is not "adequately represented" in services.
- **State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh (2024):** A landmark 7-judge SC bench verdict that overruled the *E.V. Chinnaiah (2004)* judgment, officially permitting states to sub-classify SCs and STs based on empirical data.
- **Indra Sawhney Case (1992):** Established the **50% cap** on total reservations, which remains a critical hurdle for states attempting to expand quota percentages.

## Conclusion

The Karnataka Cabinet's decision is a pragmatic application of the "Equality among Equals" principle. By shifting from a monolithic treatment of Scheduled Castes to a graded system, the state attempts to reach the "last mile" of social justice. However, the success of this model depends on its ability to withstand judicial scrutiny regarding the 50% limit and the accuracy of the underlying socio-economic data.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Mechanisms, laws, institutions, and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections; Issues relating to the management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education and Human Resources.
- **GS Paper III (Internal Security/Governance):** Impact of reservation policies on social cohesion and the role of empirical data in policy formulation.

## 3. Digital Transformation of India's Anti-Drug Crusade: NMBA 2.0 App

The launch of the Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA) 2.0 App in April 2026 represents a critical shift toward data-driven governance in India's fight against substance abuse. By integrating Grant-in-Aid (GIA) institutions and citizen-centric features, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment aims to bridge the gap between policy formulation and grassroots execution under the National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction (NAPDDR).

### Critical Pillars of the NMBA 2.0 Framework

- **Shift to Universal Coverage:** Originally launched in 2020 for 272 vulnerable districts, the NMBA was expanded to all districts nationwide in August 2023, necessitating a more robust digital monitoring tool like the 2.0 App.



- **Real-time Monitoring & Accountability:** The app provides role-based access to GIAs, enabling live reporting of de-addiction activities and, crucially, a transparent "Anudan" (Grant) status tracker to monitor fund utilization and reduce bureaucratic delays.
- **Citizen-Centric Engagement:** Moving beyond administrative use, the 2.0 version allows the public to take e-pledges, access IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) materials, and provide feedback for continuous service improvement.
- **Geospatial Integration:** The "Nearest De-addiction Centre" feature uses location-based services to facilitate immediate referral and treatment, lowering the barrier for individuals seeking help.
- **Mass Sensitization Metrics:** With over 26 crore people already sensitized—including 9.5 crore youth and 6.47 crore women—the app serves as a central repository for the 8.3 lakh activities conducted through educational and spiritual institutions.
- **Institutional Synergy:** The platform integrates critical support systems like the National Drug De-addiction Helpline (14446) and the MANAS (Mental Health and Normalcy Augmentation System) helpline, ensuring a holistic approach to recovery.



### Essential Terminology for Examination

- **NAPDDR (National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction):** An umbrella scheme providing financial assistance to NGOs and state governments for awareness, counseling, and rehabilitation.
- **Nasha Mukti Mitr:** Formerly known as "Master Volunteers," these are ground-level change agents trained to identify and assist substance users in local communities.
- **Chintan Shivir:** A high-level brainstorming session (like the one held in Chandigarh) where ministers and stakeholders deliberate on internal security and social justice strategies.
- **Substance Use Disorder (SUD):** A mental health condition where an individual's use of drugs or alcohol leads to significant impairment or distress.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 47:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that mandates the State to endeavor to bring about prohibition of the consumption (except for medicinal purposes) of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health.
- **NDPS Act, 1985:** The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act provides the legal framework for prohibitory measures and prescribes penalties for trafficking while also allowing for the treatment of addicts.
- **Article 21:** The Right to Life and Personal Liberty, which the judiciary has interpreted to include the right to health and a life of dignity, free from the shackles of addiction.
- **UN Conventions:** India is a signatory to the Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs (1961) and the Convention on Psychotropic Substances (1971), which govern international standards for drug control.



## Conclusion

The NMBA 2.0 App is not merely a technical upgrade but a strategic move to democratize the anti-drug movement. By bringing NGOs, government departments, and citizens onto a single platform, it addresses the "last-mile delivery" challenge of de-addiction services. Success will now hinge on the consistent quality of the data reported and the speed with which the "Anudan" tracking system can resolve the financial bottlenecks often faced by rehabilitation centers.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population; Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health and Human Resources.
- **GS Paper III:** Challenges to internal security (drug trafficking as a precursor to narco-terrorism); Role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

## 4. Project DANTAK: 66 Years of Strengthening India-Bhutan Strategic Ties

Project DANTAK, a premier project of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), commemorated its 66th Raising Day on April 24, 2026. Established in 1961 through an agreement between the Third King of Bhutan and India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, DANTAK stands as a testament to the "Special Relationship" between the two nations, serving as a catalyst for Bhutan's socio-economic modernization and strategic connectivity.

### Key Highlights of Project DANTAK's Contributions

- **Pioneering Infrastructure:** Project DANTAK was responsible for constructing Bhutan's first motorable road in 1961; today, it manages over 1,500 km of roads, including the critical East–West Highway connecting Trashigang to Thimphu.
- **Aviation and Connectivity:** The project was instrumental in developing the Paro International Airport and Yongphula Airport, which are vital for Bhutan's global and domestic air link.
- **Modernisation Phase:** Recent focus has shifted to "Double Laning" projects, such as the Confluence–Haa (Phase I) and the 168-km Samdrup Jongkhar–Trashigang highway, aimed at enhancing transport safety and reducing travel time.
- **Socio-Institutional Development:** Beyond roads, DANTAK has contributed to the construction of hydropower infrastructure, telecommunication networks, schools, and hospitals (like the Jigme Dorji Wangchuck National Referral Hospital).
- **Disaster Resilience:** The project plays a crucial role in maintaining connectivity during natural calamities, specializing in the rapid restoration of roads following landslides and washouts in the fragile Himalayan terrain.
- **Strategic Expansion:** Current works are focused on the South-Eastern regions (Nganglam–Dewathang) and developing alternate alignments to strengthen Bhutan's internal security and trade logistics.





## Essential Terminology for Examination

- **Border Roads Organisation (BRO):** A functional wing of the Indian Army (under the Ministry of Defence) responsible for developing and maintaining road networks in India's border areas and friendly neighboring countries.
- **East–West Highway:** A 500-km+ lifeline of Bhutan that traverses through some of the world's most difficult mountain passes, maintained largely by Project DANTAK.
- **"Friendship Highway":** A term often used to describe the Phuentsholing–Thimphu Highway, which serves as the primary trade artery between India and Bhutan.

## Constitutional and Legal Framework

- **India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty (2007):** This updated treaty forms the legal basis of the relationship, emphasizing "perpetual peace and friendship" and cooperation in economic and strategic interests.
- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** A Directive Principle (DPSP) that mandates the State to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
- **Ministry of Defence Jurisdiction:** Unlike other road projects, BRO projects like DANTAK are staffed by the General Reserve Engineer Force (GREF), governed by the Army Act, 1950, for discipline and operational efficiency.
- **Environmental Protocols:** Construction adheres to Bhutan's "High Value, Low Impact" tourism and environmental philosophy, ensuring infrastructure does not disturb the carbon-neutral status of the Kingdom.

## Conclusion

Project DANTAK is the most visible symbol of India's "Neighbourhood First" policy. By evolving from basic road-building to sophisticated infrastructure development, it has transitioned from a construction unit to a bridge of cultural and strategic synergy. As Bhutan embarks on new economic frontiers like the Gelephu Mindfulness City, DANTAK's role in providing seamless connectivity will remain the bedrock of this bilateral partnership.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its neighborhood-relations; Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India.
- **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.; Security challenges and their management in border areas.

## 5. India's Strategic Leap in Silicon Photonics: Launch of PDK and PPIC Test Engine

In a significant stride toward technological sovereignty, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched two indigenously developed Silicon Photonics solutions at IIT Madras. These tools—the Process Design Kit (PDK) and the Universal Programmable Photonic IC (PPIC) Test Engine—position India at the global forefront of high-speed data transmission and quantum computing, aligning with the objectives of the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM).



## Key Highlights of the Technological Milestone

- **Silicon Photonics PDK:** India now possesses a verified library of over 50 photonic components, enabling domestic startups and defense R&D units to design advanced Photonic Integrated Circuits (PICs) without relying on foreign proprietary kits.
- **Universal PPIC Test Engine:** This automated characterization platform allows for the precise testing of photonic and optoelectronic modules, ensuring that indigenously designed chips meet global performance standards.
- **Technology Sovereignty:** The launch establishes a "shared national facility" under the CoE-CPPICS at IIT Madras, reducing India's dependence on external intellectual property for next-generation semiconductor design.
- **Dual-Regime Applications:** The technology is versatile, catering to both "Classical" applications (data centers, 5G/6G) and "Quantum" regimes (quantum key distribution and sensing).
- **PRDM Ecosystem Model:** The center follows a "Product Research, Development and Manufacturing" model, utilizing CMOS-compatible silicon technology with international foundry and domestic packaging partners.
- **Transition to ISM 2.0:** These developments are slated to be integrated into the upcoming R&D vertical of the India Semiconductor Mission 2.0, paving the way for a dedicated Silicon Photonics Fab in India.



## Essential Terminology for Examination

- **Silicon Photonics:** A technology that uses silicon as an optical medium to transfer data through light (photons) instead of electrical signals (electrons), drastically increasing speed and reducing power consumption.
- **Process Design Kit (PDK):** A set of software tools and data files used by circuit designers to represent a specific fabrication process for a semiconductor foundry.
- **Photonic Integrated Circuit (PIC):** A chip that contains photonic components (lasers, detectors, waveguides) that form an optical circuit, similar to an electronic integrated circuit.
- **CMOS Compatibility:** The ability of new technology to be manufactured using Complementary Metal-Oxide-Semiconductor processes, which are the standard for most modern microchips.

## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51A(h):** Part of the Fundamental Duties, it urges citizens and the State to develop the "scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform," which underpins support for R&D hubs like CoE-CPPICS.
- **National Policy on Electronics (NPE):** Provides the policy framework to position India as a global hub for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) and to create an enabling environment for the industry to compete globally.
- **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM):** A specialized business division within the Digital India Corporation aimed at building a vibrant semiconductor and display design ecosystem to enable India's emergence as a global hub for electronics manufacturing.



- **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Laws:** The indigenously developed PDK falls under Indian IPR protections, ensuring that the "design-led" manufacturing remains a strategic national asset.

## Conclusion

The indigenous development of Silicon Photonics tools at IIT Madras marks the transition of India from a consumer of semiconductor technology to a creator of high-end design IP. By bridging the gap between theoretical research and industrial-scale fabrication through the PRDM model, India is effectively future-proofing its digital infrastructure. The next logical step—the establishment of a Silicon Photonics Fab—will be the cornerstone of India's objective to become a global semiconductor powerhouse by 2030.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology—developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; Indigenization of technology and developing new technology; IT, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nanotechnology, and Bio-technology.
- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

## 6. Empowering Rural Enterprise: SARAS Aajeevika Mela Calendar FY 2026–27

The Ministry of Rural Development has officially announced the national-level calendar for SARAS Aajeevika Melas for the Financial Year 2026–27. These melas, organized under the aegis of the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), act as a bridge between rural Self-Help Group (SHG) artisans and urban markets, playing a pivotal role in the socio-economic transformation of rural India.

### Key Highlights of the FY 2026–27 Calendar

- **Strategic Locations and Timing:** Three flagship events are scheduled in the NCR region, including Gurugram (October 2026) and New Delhi (November 2026 and February 2027), targeting high-density urban consumer bases during peak festival and winter seasons.
- **National Platform for SHGs:** The melas provide a direct marketing interface for thousands of rural women entrepreneurs from various States and UTs, eliminating middlemen and ensuring better profit margins for the producers.
- **Diverse Product Showcase:** The events will feature a wide array of rural outputs, ranging from handlooms and handicrafts to natural organic products and authentic regional cuisines through the SARAS Food Festival.
- **Capacity Building and Branding:** Beyond mere sales, the initiative focuses on professionalizing rural enterprises by providing exposure to modern packaging, competitive branding, and consumer behavior trends.
- **Cultural and Social Integration:** By showcasing traditional art forms and indigenous crafts, the melas contribute to the preservation of India's intangible cultural heritage while fostering inclusive economic growth.
- **Promotion of 'Vocal for Local':** The initiative aligns with the broader national vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat by encouraging urban populations to support and sustain local rural livelihoods.





## Essential Terminology for Examination

- **DAY-NRLM:** A poverty alleviation program of the Government of India that focuses on promoting self-employment and organization of the rural poor into Self-Help Groups.
- **Self-Help Groups (SHGs):** Small voluntary associations of rural people, preferably women, who come together to solve their common problems through mutual help and regular savings.
- **Market Linkages:** The process of connecting producers (especially small-scale rural artisans) to consumers or commercial buyers to ensure a sustainable flow of income.
- **Livelihood Diversification:** The process by which rural households construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in order to survive and improve their standard of living.

## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 39:** A Directive Principle (DPSP) that directs the State to ensure that citizens have the right to an adequate means of livelihood and that the economic system does not result in the concentration of wealth.
- **Article 46:** Mandates the State to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, particularly the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act:** While primarily about Panchayati Raj, it empowers local bodies to implement schemes for economic development and social justice, including those related to rural industries and small-scale enterprises.
- **NRLM Institutional Framework:** The mission is implemented through a dedicated autonomous society at the national level and State Rural Livelihood Missions (SRLMs) at the state level, providing a legal structure for fund flow and monitoring.

## Conclusion

The SARAS Aajeevika Mela is more than just a commercial exhibition; it is an instrument of dignity for the rural woman entrepreneur. By finalizing the calendar well in advance for 2026–27, the government ensures that SHGs have sufficient time for production planning and quality control. For India to reach its goal of a 5-trillion-dollar economy, the integration of rural production cycles with urban consumption patterns—exemplified by these melas—remains an indispensable strategy.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; Issues relating to poverty and hunger.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

## 7. The Moral Eclipse of Politics: Ethics, Authority, and Modern Warfare

The contemporary political landscape is increasingly defined by a "striking away" of ethical foundations, where political authority is often divorced from its classical purpose (telos). As power seeks legitimacy through spectacle or sacred imagery rather than genuine moral seriousness, democratic discourse risks collapsing into organized domination and dehumanization.



## Key Dimensions of the Ethical Crisis in Politics

- **Aristotelian Foundations vs. Modern Pragmatism:** Aristotle viewed the *polis* (state) as an entity existing to enable "human flourishing" through ethics. Modern politics, however, often treats ethics as an "optional supplement," prioritizing expediency and the survival of raw power over moral legitimacy.
- **Co-option of Sacred Imagery:** To mask vulnerabilities or lack of moral authority, political figures often employ religious symbols or memes—such as the portrayal of secular leaders in Christ-like imagery—to claim an "aura of inviolability" that is beyond criticism.
- **The Incoherence of Modern Morality:** Morality has not vanished but has become "splintered." Rhetoric often hypocritically denounces elitism while facilitating the concentration of wealth, replacing traditional justice with a binary "good vs. evil" framework used to silence dissent.
- **War as an Epistemic Failure:** Conflict represents the ultimate collapse of political morality. It requires "dehumanization"—the mental mutilation of the "other"—to render mass destruction permissible. Modern wars in regions like Gaza and Ukraine often sanitize suffering through the language of "strategic necessity."
- **Technological Remove and Loss of Empathy:** Unlike ancient warfare (Hellenic era) which required "moral proximity" and face-to-face recognition of the enemy's humanity, modern warfare (as noted by Baudrillard) turns humans into "disembodied data points," removing the psychological barrier to violence.
- **Need for Reconstituted Ethics:** The solution lies in a public sphere that privileges "truth and deliberation" over viral outrage, and an education system focused on critical thought and "moral imagination" to anchor power within the bounds of justice.



## Essential Terminology for Examination

- **Telos:** A Greek term referring to the ultimate end, purpose, or goal of a thing; in politics, the telos is the realization of the common good and justice.
- **Veil of Ignorance:** A thought experiment by John Rawls where one designs a just society without knowing their own status, wealth, or identity within it, ensuring fairness for all.
- **Epistemic Failure:** A breakdown in the capacity to know or perceive the truth, specifically the inability to recognize the inherent dignity of others.
- **Politics of Expedience:** A governance style where decisions are made based on immediate practical advantage or political survival rather than principle or long-term moral consistency.

## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Preamble of the Constitution:** Explicitly mentions "Justice (Social, Economic, and Political)" and "Fraternity," embodying the Aristotelian idea that the state exists for the dignity of the individual.
- **Article 51:** A Directive Principle (DPSP) that mandates the State to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations, reflecting the ethical anchor for foreign policy.



- **Article 14:** The Right to Equality, which aligns with Rawlsian "fairness" by ensuring that the law treats all citizens without the "privileges of identity or circumstance."
- **International Humanitarian Law (IHL):** Legal frameworks like the Geneva Conventions that attempt to re-introduce "moral proximity" into war by protecting non-combatants and limiting the means of warfare.

### Conclusion

The "moral eclipse" of politics is not a sign of progress but a regression toward a hollowed-out conception of power. When ethics is dismissed as "naive interference," the state loses its claim to legitimacy and becomes a mere instrument of rivalry. Reviving the link between ethics and politics is not a sentimental preference but a structural necessity for the survival of democratic institutions and global peace.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Ethical concerns in international relations; concept of "Justice as Fairness" (Rawls); the role of empathy and moral imagination in public administration.
- **GS Paper II:** Pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity (influence of religious/moral authorities on politics).

## 8. Urban Disenfranchisement: The Crisis of Universal Adult Franchise

The foundational vision of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar sought to transition India from "one person, one vote" to "one person, one economic unit." However, contemporary urban India is witnessing a reversal of this democratic spirit. Through bureaucratic hurdles and selective filtration, large sections of the urban poor, migrants, and minorities are being systematically excluded from the electoral process, undermining the core of India's constitutional democracy.

### Critical Dimensions of Urban Electoral Exclusion

- **Systematic Deletion through SIR:** The Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls has led to massive deletions in major cities. For instance, Ghaziabad saw 36.67% of names removed, while Lucknow witnessed 30.88% deletions, disproportionately affecting mobile, unorganised workforces.
- **Marginalisation of Slum Dwellers:** With nearly 40% of India's urban population living in slums (World Bank data), rigid requirements for "stable residence" documentation effectively disenfranchise those in informal housing. In Mumbai, approximately 50% of residents in informal settlements remain unregistered.
- **Bureaucratic Hurdles for Migrants:** The demand for historical residence proof (e.g., documents from 2002/2005) acts as an exclusionary tool against the working class and migrants, for whom high mobility is a survival necessity.
- **Compromised Secrecy:** The current EVM system allows for booth-wise revelation of results. In small urban booths, this exposes the voting patterns of demographic groups, making them vulnerable to post-poll intimidation or selective neglect by political parties.
- **Selective Filtration:** The process is criticized for acting as a political filter, where groups perceived as "threats to capital" or non-aligned with the ruling dispensation face higher incidences of deletion, as seen in Kolkata's Gulshan Colony where 90% of voters were missing.
- **Demographic Deficit:** While the population under 18 averages 28% in urban areas, the gap between eligible voters and those actually on the rolls indicates that millions of adults remain outside the "democratic base."



## Essential Terminology for Examination

- **Universal Adult Franchise:** The right of all adult citizens (18+) to vote regardless of wealth, income, gender, social status, race, or ethnicity.
- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR):** A rigorous process by the Election Commission to update electoral rolls, often involving house-to-house verification to remove "shifted" or "deceased" voters.
- **Informal Settlements:** Residential areas where a group of housing units has been constructed on land that the occupants have no legal claim to, or which occupies the land illegally.
- **Booth-wise Result:** The practice of recording and declaring the count of votes from individual Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) at specific polling stations.



## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 326:** Grants every citizen of India, who is not less than 18 years of age, the right to be registered as a voter, subject to disqualifications like non-residence or unsoundness of mind.
- **Article 324:** Vests the superintendence, direction, and control of elections (including the preparation of electoral rolls) in the Election Commission of India.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1950:** Governs the registration of elective rolls and qualifications for voters (specifically Sections 14 to 25).
- **Doctrine of Residuary Right:** Based on T.N. Seshan's interpretation, "residence" should be interpreted broadly to include those living on pavements, ensuring that poverty is not a ground for disenfranchisement.

## Conclusion

The health of a democracy is measured by the inclusivity of its electoral rolls. The current trajectory of urban "reforms" risks creating a "cleansed" electorate that excludes the very people—migrants and the poor—who build our cities. To fulfill Ambedkar's vision, the Election Commission must move from a model of "selective filtration" to one of "maximum outreach," ensuring that the right to vote remains a birthright rather than a documentation-linked privilege.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Salient features of the Representation of People's Act; Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies (ECI).
- **GS Paper I (Social Issues):** Urbanization, their problems and their remedies; Poverty and developmental issues.

## 9. India's FDI Surge: Breaking the Six-Month Net Negative Jinx

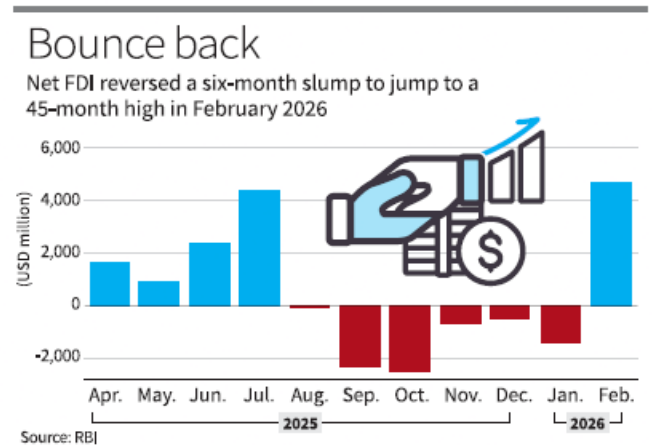
The Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) latest data for February 2026 reveals a significant turnaround in India's foreign investment landscape. After a six-month period of negative net inflows, India recorded a net FDI of \$4.6 billion—the highest in 45 months. This recovery signals renewed global investor confidence and highlights India's resilience amidst global macroeconomic shifts.

### Key Highlights of the February FDI Recovery

- **Highest Net Inflow in 45 Months:** Net FDI reached \$4.6 billion, marking the strongest performance since May 2022 and ending a persistent six-month streak of outflows exceeding inflows.



- **Surge in Gross FDI:** Gross inflows grew by 61.6% to reach approximately \$9 billion. For the first 11 months of FY 2025-26, gross FDI stood at \$88.3 billion, an 18.1% year-on-year growth.
- **Sectoral Dominance:** Over two-thirds of total equity inflows were concentrated in high-growth sectors: Manufacturing, Computer Services, Financial Services, Business Services, and Communication Services.
- **Leading Source Nations:** Approximately 75% of inflows originated from five major economies: Singapore, the U.S., Mauritius, Japan, and the Netherlands.
- **Sharp Drop in Repatriation:** Outflows fell to a 27-month low of \$4.4 billion, primarily due to a 30% year-on-year reduction in repatriation and disinvestment by foreign entities.
- **Greenfield Project Resilience:** While global announcements for greenfield projects in India saw a marginal dip of 11%, the RBI maintains that India remains a premier destination for long-term "ground-up" industrial investments.



### Essential Terminology for Examination

- **Net FDI vs. Gross FDI:** Gross FDI is the total capital entering the country. Net FDI is the balance left after subtracting outward FDI (investments by Indians abroad) and repatriation/disinvestment by foreign investors from the Gross FDI.
- **Greenfield FDI:** An investment where a parent company starts a new venture in a foreign country by constructing new operational facilities from scratch.
- **Repatriation:** The process of converting foreign currency back into the currency of the investor's home country, often involving the transfer of profits, dividends, or capital gains.
- **Disinvestment:** The action of an organization or government selling or liquidating an asset or subsidiary.

### Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** The primary legislation regulating FDI in India, aimed at facilitating external trade and payments and promoting the orderly development of the foreign exchange market.
- **DPIIT Guidelines:** The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (Ministry of Commerce) issues the "Consolidated FDI Policy," which classifies sectors into "Automatic Route" (no prior approval) and "Government Route."
- **Article 246:** Grants Parliament the power to make laws with respect to "Foreign Loans" and "Foreign Exchange," which form the basis for regulating international capital flows.
- **Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs):** Legal agreements between India and other nations to protect and promote investments, currently being renegotiated under the "Model BIT 2016" to balance investor protection with state sovereignty.



## Conclusion

The breakout in net FDI inflows suggests that the "wait-and-watch" approach of global investors may be shifting toward active deployment in the Indian market. While the decline in repatriation provides immediate relief to the Capital Account, the long-term challenge remains the revitalization of greenfield project announcements. For India to sustain this momentum, continued structural reforms in manufacturing and simplified exit norms under FEMA will be crucial to ensure that capital not only enters but stays and multiplies within the domestic economy.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Effects of liberalization on the economy.
- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.
- **Strategic Importance:** Understanding the "Balance of Payments" (BoP) and the role of FDI in stabilizing the Indian Rupee against global volatility.

## 10. DeepSeek-V4: China's Leap in Low-Cost, High-Performance AI

The release of DeepSeek-V4 by the Chinese startup DeepSeek marks a significant milestone in the global artificial intelligence landscape. By achieving high-tier reasoning capabilities and ultra-long context windows at a "drastically reduced" cost, this model challenges the dominance of US-based AI labs. This development is not merely a technological breakthrough but a focal point in the escalating techno-geopolitical rivalry between Washington and Beijing.

### Key Highlights of DeepSeek-V4

- **Drastic Cost Efficiency:** The model continues DeepSeek's legacy of "low-cost reasoning," aiming to match the performance of flagship US models like GPT-4 or Gemini while requiring significantly fewer computational and financial resources.
- **Ultra-Long Context Window:** V4 supports a context length of 1 million tokens (building blocks of text), placing it on par with Google's Gemini and enabling the processing of massive documents or complex datasets in a single prompt.
- **Reasoning Capabilities:** Building on its predecessor (DeepSeek-R1), the V4 iteration focuses on advanced logical reasoning, coding, and mathematical problem-solving, which are critical for scientific and industrial R&D.
- **US-China AI Rivalry:** The launch coincided with White House allegations of Chinese entities attempting to steal AI technology—claims which Beijing has dismissed as "baseless"—highlighting AI as the new frontier of the "Cold War" in tech.
- **Tokenization Advancements:** The model utilizes refined tokenization (the process of breaking down text), which allows for more nuanced understanding and generation of punctuation and complex linguistic structures.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** For China, DeepSeek represents a successful domestic alternative to Silicon Valley models, proving that innovation can thrive despite US-led export restrictions on high-end GPUs like Nvidia's H100s.



## Essential Terminology for Examination

- **Tokens:** The basic units of text (words, syllables, or characters) that an AI model processes. A larger "token limit" or "context window" allows the model to remember more information during a conversation.
- **Reasoning Model:** An AI designed specifically to perform multi-step logical thinking, often used for complex tasks like debugging code or solving advanced calculus.
- **Large Language Model (LLM):** A type of AI trained on vast amounts of data to understand, summarize, generate, and predict new content.
- **Compute-Efficiency:** The ability of an AI model to deliver high performance using less processing power or energy, which is a major competitive advantage in the resource-heavy AI sector.



## Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51A(h):** The Indian Constitution lists the development of a "scientific temper" as a fundamental duty, which in the modern era extends to understanding and regulating disruptive technologies like AI.
- **National Strategy on AI (NITI Aayog):** India's policy framework for "AI for All," focusing on healthcare, agriculture, and education, while monitoring global developments like DeepSeek to ensure domestic competitiveness.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023:** While primarily about data, this act governs how AI models (domestic or foreign) handle the personal data of Indian citizens during training or inference.
- **UN Resolution on AI (2024):** India is a signatory to the first UN-backed global resolution on AI, emphasizing "safe, secure, and trustworthy" AI systems that respect human rights and international law.

## Conclusion

DeepSeek-V4 represents a shift in the AI paradigm from "bigger is better" to "smarter and cheaper is better." As China demonstrates the ability to innovate high-performance models with reduced costs, the global AI race is moving toward efficiency rather than just raw scale. For India, this underscores the need to invest in indigenous "sovereign AI" and specialized LLMs that can operate effectively on localized datasets without the astronomical costs associated with Western proprietary models.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology—developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; Indigenization of technology; Issues relating to Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).
- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests (US-China tech war); International relations and technology diplomacy.



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