



“ We help you reach for the star ”

VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY
&
STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 02/05/2026 (SATURDAY)



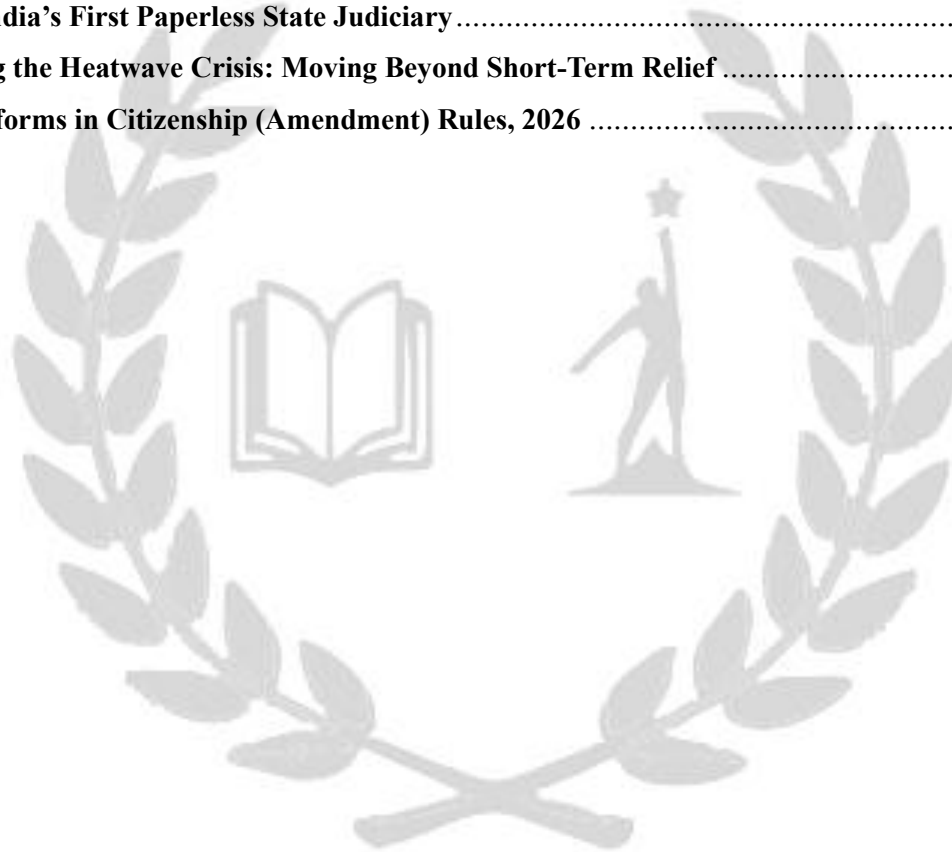
9972258970 & 9740702455

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



Table of Contents

1. Record Surge in GST Collections: April 2026	2
2. Launch of 'Catch the Rain 2026' Campaign: Urban Water Security	3
3. Karnataka's Digital Grievance Portal for Gig Workers: A National First.....	5
4. UAE's Historic Exit from OPEC: Strategic Autonomy in a Volatile Market.....	6
5. U.S. Naval Blockade of Iran: Geopolitical and Economic Implications	8
6. Centre Invokes Force Majeure Clause Amid West Asia Crisis	9
7. ISRO's Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV): Commercial Pivot 2026-27.....	11
9. India's 2026 Monsoon Outlook and Economic Implications.....	13
10. Sikkim: India's First Paperless State Judiciary	14
11. Addressing the Heatwave Crisis: Moving Beyond Short-Term Relief	15
12. Digital Reforms in Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2026	17

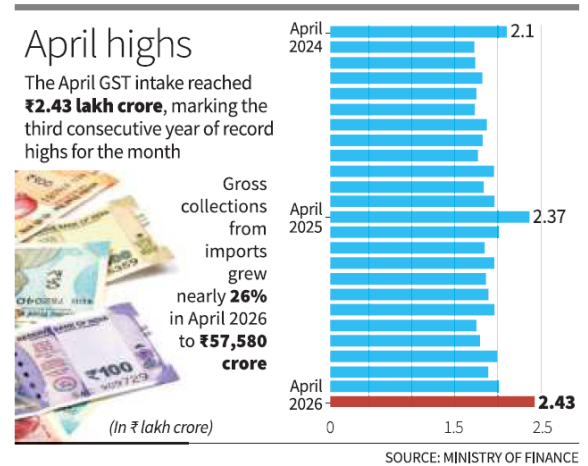


VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. Record Surge in GST Collections: April 2026

- **Historic Achievement:** India's Gross Goods and Services Tax (GST) revenue reached an unprecedented peak of ₹2.43 lakh crore in April 2026, marking an 8.7% year-on-year growth compared to the same month in 2025.
- **Net Revenue Position:** After accounting for tax refunds, the net GST collection stood at ₹2.11 lakh crore, reflecting a 7.3% increase, which indicates a robust underlying tax base despite global economic volatility.
- **Import-Led Growth:** The primary catalyst for this record surge was revenue from imports, which grew by nearly 26% to ₹57,580 crore, while domestic transaction growth remained relatively modest at 4.3% (₹1.85 lakh crore).
- **The "March Effect":** Tax experts attribute the annual April spike to the "financial year-end push," where businesses and tax administrators finalize accounts for March to meet annual fiscal targets, a trend consistent since the 2017 rollout (excluding the 2020 pandemic year).
- **Resilience Amid Headwinds:** This fiscal performance is significant as it occurred despite geopolitical tensions in West Asia and broader global economic uncertainty, signaling strong domestic consumption and effective tax administration.
- **Composition of Collections:** The gross figure comprises Central GST (CGST), State GST (SGST), Integrated GST (IGST) on both domestic and imported goods, and the Compensation Cess levied on demerit goods.



Key Definitions & Concepts

- **IGST (Integrated GST):** Levied on all Inter-State supplies of goods and/or services and also on imports. It is collected by the Centre and then apportioned between the Union and the States.
- **Net GST Revenue:** The gross amount collected minus the refunds issued to taxpayers (such as exporters or those with an inverted duty structure).
- **Inverted Duty Structure:** A situation where the tax rate on inputs purchased is higher than the tax rate on finished goods sold, leading to a buildup of input tax credit.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **101st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2016:** Introduced the GST regime in India, fundamentally altering the fiscal federalism landscape by subsuming various Central and State indirect taxes.
- **Article 246A:** Grants Parliament and State Legislatures concurrent power to make laws with respect to GST. However, Parliament has exclusive power to legislate on GST where the supply takes place in the course of inter-state trade.
- **Article 279A:** Provides for the constitution of the GST Council, a joint forum of the Centre and States, chaired by the Union Finance Minister, to make recommendations on tax rates, exemptions, and thresholds.
- **GST Compensation Cess:** Originally intended to compensate states for revenue loss for five years, it continues to be levied to repay loans taken during the pandemic period.



Additional Key Points for Analysis

- **Compliance & Tech Integration:** Increased collections are also linked to the strengthening of the GSTN (GST Network) and the use of deep data analytics to curb tax evasion and "fake invoicing."
- **Consumption Patterns:** The slower growth in domestic collections (4.3%) compared to imports (26%) may prompt policy discussions regarding the cooling of domestic demand versus the buoyancy of the external trade sector.

Conclusion

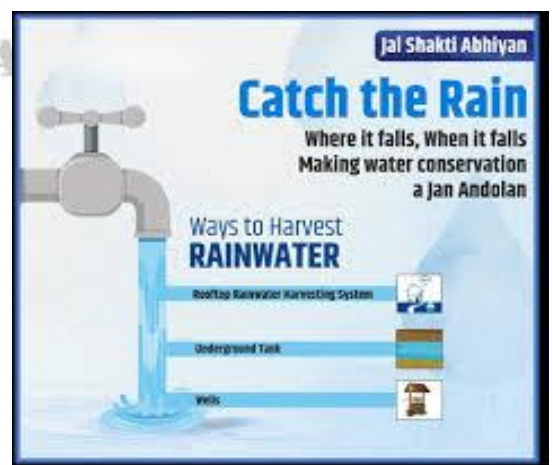
The record-breaking collection of ₹2.43 lakh crore underscores the maturity and stability of the GST regime as it enters its ninth year. While the April peak is seasonally anticipated, the consistent upward trajectory validates the formalization of the Indian economy. Moving forward, the focus will likely shift toward rationalizing the multiple tax slabs and addressing the widening gap between domestic and import-led revenue growth to ensure sustainable fiscal health.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Issues relating to federal structure (GST Council), Statutory/Regulatory bodies, and Constitutional amendments.
- **General Studies III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, and development. Fiscal Policy and Government Budgeting.

2. Launch of 'Catch the Rain 2026' Campaign: Urban Water Security

- **Strategic Launch:** The Government of Delhi, through the Delhi Jal Board, has initiated the 'Catch the Rain 2026' campaign to combat the escalating water crisis caused by rapid urbanization and a growing population.
- **Public Symbolism:** The campaign introduced 'Neera', the official water mascot, designed to simplify the concept of water conservation and foster a sense of individual ownership among citizens.
- **Decisive Climate Action:** The initiative emphasizes that water scarcity is no longer a theoretical concern but an immediate threat requiring decentralized solutions like localized rainwater harvesting (RWH) and groundwater recharge.
- **Collective Responsibility:** A key pillar of the campaign is the shift from government-led infrastructure to community participation, urging every household and residential society to install RWH systems.
- **Focus on Groundwater:** With traditional water sources reaching their limits, the campaign prioritizes replenishing depleted aquifers to ensure long-term sustainability for the capital's water table.
- **Urban Resilience:** The drive aligns with broader urban planning goals to create "Sponge Cities" that can effectively manage monsoon runoff to prevent urban flooding while storing water for the lean season.





Key Definitions & Concepts

- **Rainwater Harvesting (RWH):** The process of collecting and storing rainwater from rooftops, parks, or open grounds for future use or for recharging groundwater.
- **Groundwater Recharge:** A hydrologic process where water moves downward from surface water to groundwater, essentially "refilling" the underground aquifers.
- **Sponge City Concept:** An urban construction model that prioritizes nature-based solutions to absorb, store, and purify rainwater, reducing runoff and heat island effects.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The Right to Life includes the Right to Clean Water. The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that access to safe and sufficient water is a fundamental human right.
- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Mandates the State to endeavor to protect and improve the environment.
- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duties):** Casts a duty upon every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, including lakes and rivers.
- **Entry 17 (State List):** Water, including water supplies, irrigation, and canals, falls primarily under the jurisdiction of State governments.
- **Model Bill for Groundwater Management:** Suggested by the Centre to states to regulate and control the development and management of groundwater resources.

Additional Key Points for Analysis

- **Institutional Integration:** Success depends on the convergence of departments like the Municipal Corporation (MCD), Public Works Department (PWD), and Water Boards to ensure RWH compliance in building bylaws.
- **Data-Driven Conservation:** Implementing smart meters and GIS mapping of water bodies can help in identifying critical zones for artificial recharge.
- **Traditional Knowledge:** Incorporating ancient Indian water management techniques (like Johads or Baolis) into modern urban landscapes can enhance efficiency.

Conclusion

The 'Catch the Rain 2026' campaign serves as a critical intervention for Delhi's water-stressed landscape. By moving beyond policy discussions into active public engagement, the government aims to bridge the demand-supply gap. However, the long-term success of such drives rests on strict enforcement of building codes, regular maintenance of harvesting pits, and a sustained behavioral change towards water as a finite, shared resource.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies I:** Urbanization, their problems, and their remedies; Geographical features and their location-changes in critical geographical features (water-bodies).
- **General Studies II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; Issues relating to the management of social sector/Services relating to Health and Water.
- **General Studies III:** Conservation, environmental pollution, and degradation; Disaster management (Urban Flooding).



- **Prelims:** Major government schemes (Jal Jeevan Mission, Atal Bhujal Yojana), basic hydrology, and Mascot-related current affairs.

3. Karnataka's Digital Grievance Portal for Gig Workers: A National First

- **Pioneering Mechanism:** The Karnataka government has operationalized India's first specialized grievance redressal mechanism for platform-based gig workers, developed by the Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers' Board and the Department of e-Governance.
- **Digital Integration:** Workers can now lodge formal complaints regarding pay, working conditions, and platform disputes via the Integrated Public Grievance Redressal System (IPGRS) portal, creating a digital bridge between labor and technology aggregators.
- **Mandatory Internal Committees:** Under state law, every aggregator platform must constitute an Internal Dispute Resolution Committee (IDRC) to settle grievances routed from the IPGRS within a strictly defined timeframe.
- **Shift from Informality:** This initiative transitions the gig economy from an informal, unregulated space into a structured framework, providing legal recourse to approximately 12 lakh active workers previously operating without dispute resolution tools.
- **Scientific Welfare Structuring:** The state is collaborating with global academic experts (IISc, King's College, Bristol University) to design welfare schemes tailored to different gig segments, accounting for variables like gender, nature of work, and daily workload.
- **Government as Facilitator:** While platforms handle the primary resolution, the state government acts as a central monitoring authority to ensure transparency and accountability in the communication flow between workers and companies.

Key Definitions & Concepts

- **Gig Worker:** A person who performs work or participates in a work arrangement and earns from such activities outside of a traditional employer-employee relationship.
- **Platform Work:** A form of employment that uses an online platform to enable organizations or individuals to access other organizations or individuals to solve specific problems or to provide specific services.
- **Aggregator:** A digital intermediary or marketplace for a buyer of service to connect with a seller of service (e.g., Swiggy, Zomato, Uber).



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The right to a dignified life, which the judiciary increasingly interprets to include fair working conditions and livelihood security.
- **Article 42 (DPSP):** Directs the State to make provision for securing just and humane conditions of work.
- **Article 43 (DPSP):** Mandates the State to endeavor to secure a living wage and a decent standard of life for all workers.
- **Code on Social Security (2020):** A Central legislation that, for the first time, recognized "gig workers" and "platform workers" for the purpose of providing social security benefits.



- **The Karnataka Platform-Based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Act:** The state-specific legal framework that provides the statutory backing for the newly launched grievance portal and the Gig Workers' Board.

Additional Key Points for Analysis

- **Gender-Specific Welfare:** The government's recognition that different sectors (e.g., cab driving vs. domestic services) have different demographic compositions allows for more targeted and effective social security interventions.
- **Algorithmic Accountability:** By formalizing disputes over "platform-specific issues," the portal implicitly addresses grievances related to algorithmic management, such as arbitrary blocking of worker IDs or opaque incentive structures.
- **Data-Driven Governance:** Leveraging the IPGRS ensures that the government has real-time data on the types of exploitation or hurdles faced by workers, enabling better policy adjustments.

Conclusion

Karnataka's move to digitize grievance redressal for gig workers marks a watershed moment in Indian labor jurisprudence. By integrating technology with social security, the state has provided a template for balancing the flexibility of the gig model with the fundamental rights of the workforce. The success of this portal will depend on the efficacy of the IDRCs and the state's ability to enforce timelines on multi-national aggregators, eventually paving the way for a more equitable digital economy.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population; Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; Issues arising out of their design and implementation.
- **General Studies III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to employment; Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.
- **Prelims:** Definition of Gig/Platform workers under the Code on Social Security 2020; State vs. Central jurisdiction on labor; Functions of the IPGRS portal.

4. UAE's Historic Exit from OPEC: Strategic Autonomy in a Volatile Market

- **Decisive Withdrawal:** On April 28, 2026, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) officially announced its exit from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the OPEC+ alliance, effective May 1, 2026. This move, providing only three days' notice, surprised the global market and coincided with the GCC Consultative Summit.
- **Production Quota Tensions:** Despite holding the world's sixth-largest oil reserves (approx. 113 billion barrels), the UAE's production was capped at 3.45 mbpd by OPEC quotas. This created a significant "grouse," as the country has invested \$150 billion to raise its capacity to 5 mbpd, leaving nearly 1.5 mbpd of capacity unutilized.
- **The "Peak Oil" Strategy:** Emirati strategists believe global oil demand is nearing its "Peak Oil" moment. By exiting the cartel, Abu Dhabi aims to unfetter itself from restrictions to maximize sales and market share before the long-term decline in crude value begins.





- **Geopolitical Maneuvering:** The exit is seen as a reassertion of regional autonomy amidst a deepening rivalry with Saudi Arabia and the backdrop of the Iran-Israel conflict. It allows the UAE to independently navigate the "double blockade" of the Strait of Hormuz using its Habshan-Fujairah pipeline.
- **Economic Transformation:** To fund its ambitious transition toward a post-oil economy—focused on AI and data centers—the UAE requires immediate high oil revenues, which was hindered by OPEC's production cuts intended to stabilize global prices.
- **Market Impact:** As OPEC's third-largest producer, the UAE's departure significantly weakens the cartel's collective grip on global supply, potentially shifting the balance of power toward independent producers like the U.S., Brazil, and Norway.

Key Definitions & Concepts

- **Peak Oil:** The hypothetical point in time when the global production or demand for oil reaches its maximum rate, after which it enters a terminal decline.
- **OPEC+:** A loosely affiliated entity consisting of the 13 OPEC members and 10 non-OPEC oil-producing nations (led by Russia) that coordinate to regulate global oil supply.
- **Swing Producer:** A supplier or a close-knit group of suppliers that possesses enough spare capacity to significantly influence global markets by increasing or decreasing production at will.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 73 (Union List):** In the Indian context, "Mineral oil and resources; petroleum and petroleum products" fall under Entry 53 of the Union List, giving the Central Government exclusive power over energy diplomacy.
- **International Law of Treaties:** The withdrawal process from international organizations like OPEC is governed by the specific statutes of the organization and the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.
- **Strategic Ties:** India and the UAE are bound by a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" (2017), which provides a legal and diplomatic framework for joint investments in Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR).

Additional Key Points for Analysis

- **Regional Rivalry:** The move highlights a growing cleavage within the GCC, where the UAE is increasingly pursuing a nationalistic foreign policy independent of the traditional Saudi-led consensus.
- **Market Volatility:** While the exit might lead to lower prices in the long run due to increased supply, short-term geopolitical risk premiums (due to the Iran war) may keep prices volatile.
- **Infrastructure Advantage:** The Abu Dhabi (Habshan)-Fujairah pipeline allows the UAE to bypass the vulnerable Strait of Hormuz, giving it a strategic export advantage over peers who remain blockaded.

Conclusion

The UAE's departure from OPEC marks a structural break in the global energy order. By choosing national interest over cartel discipline, Abu Dhabi has signaled that the era of unified Gulf oil policy is waning. For a world transitioning toward renewables, this move accelerates the scramble for market share, potentially



turning the "oil cartel" into a relic of the 20th century while empowering large consumers to seek more flexible, bilateral energy security arrangements.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests; Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India.
- **General Studies III:** Energy security, Infrastructure, and the impact of global supply chain disruptions on the Indian economy.
- **Prelims:** Locations of the Strait of Hormuz and Fujairah; OPEC vs. OPEC+ membership; Concept of Peak Oil and Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR).

5. U.S. Naval Blockade of Iran: Geopolitical and Economic Implications

- **Strategic Shift:** For decades, Iran bypassed financial pressure through "shadow ships" selling oil to China. However, the current U.S. Navy blockade of all Iranian ports has effectively neutralized this "dark fleet," cutting off the primary source of Tehran's foreign exchange.
- **Economic Strangulation:** The blockade has caused the Iranian Rial to plummet to 1.81 million per dollar, fueled soaring food prices, and led to massive unemployment. The Iranian Shipping Association admits that only 40% of trade can be diverted via land routes through the Caucasus or Pakistan, which are insufficient to sustain the economy.
- **Internal Political Schism:** The crisis has fractured Iran's leadership. Moderates, led by President Masoud Pezeshkian, favor a negotiated deal to prevent political collapse, while hard-liners under Saeed Jalili advocate for military escalation to drive up global oil prices and pressure the U.S. administration.
- **Threat to Global Infrastructure:** In a desperate bid to break the deadlock, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) has threatened to target undersea internet cables in the Strait of Hormuz, which could disrupt global telecommunications and financial markets.
- **Asymmetric Warfare Risks:** With 90% of its conventional navy destroyed, Iran is signaling the use of unconventional maritime assets, including submarines and mine-carrying mammals, to target U.S. warships and enforce its own "crisis of market confidence."
- **The Nuclear Linkage:** The U.S. administration has signaled that the blockade will remain "100% foolproof" until Iran accedes to comprehensive nuclear demands, turning a maritime tactical operation into a tool for ultimate diplomatic leverage.



Key Definitions & Concepts

- **Shadow Ships/Dark Fleet:** A network of older tankers with obscured ownership that turn off their Automatic Identification Systems (AIS) to clandestinely transport sanctioned oil.
- **Naval Blockade:** An act of war where a belligerent prevents all vessels from entering or leaving the ports of an enemy state to cut off its international trade.



- **Strait of Hormuz:** A strategic chokepoint between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, through which approximately 20% of the world's total oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) consumption passes.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 of the UN Charter:** Deals with the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations.
- **UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** While the U.S. is not a signatory, it follows its customary laws. UNCLOS governs "innocent passage" through territorial waters and "transit passage" through international straits like Hormuz.
- **Sanctions vs. Blockade:** Legally, sanctions are economic restrictions (often authorized by UN Security Council or domestic law), whereas a physical blockade is traditionally considered an act of war under international law (San Remo Manual).

Additional Key Points for Analysis

- **Succession Crisis:** The death of Ali Khamenei and the rise of Mojtaba Khamenei has added a layer of domestic instability, making the regime's response to the blockade more unpredictable as the new Supreme Leader seeks to consolidate power.
- **China's Dilemma:** As the primary buyer of Iranian oil, the total cessation of these shipments forces China to seek more expensive alternatives, potentially shifting the dynamics of the China-Iran-U.S. triangular relationship.
- **Domestic Resilience:** The Iranian regime is betting on American domestic pressure regarding high gasoline prices, while the U.S. is betting on the total collapse of the Iranian economy to force a surrender.

Conclusion

The U.S. naval blockade represents a transition from "maximum pressure" via sanctions to "direct kinetic containment." By successfully sealing off Iran's maritime trade, the U.S. has forced Tehran into a desperate corner where the cost of endurance may soon outweigh the cost of direct military conflict. The situation remains a "powder keg" where a single miscalculation in the Strait of Hormuz could trigger a global energy and telecommunications crisis.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** India and its neighborhood-relations; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests (West Asia crisis and energy security).
- **General Studies III:** Security challenges and their management in border areas; Impact of global conflicts on the Indian economy (Import inflation and Diaspora safety).
- **Prelims:** Mapping of the Strait of Hormuz and Caucasus region; UNCLOS provisions; Major undersea cable routes and their importance to the digital economy.

6. Centre Invokes Force Majeure Clause Amid West Asia Crisis

- **Administrative Relief:** The Union Government has officially permitted contractors to invoke the 'Force Majeure' (FM) clause in government contracts that have been adversely affected by the ongoing geopolitical instability in West Asia.



- **Penalty-Free Extensions:** This directive allows for an extension of project deadlines for a period of up to four months, ensuring that contractors are not penalized for delays caused by circumstances beyond their control.
- **Broad Coverage:** The order is applicable across all central government agencies and covers a wide spectrum of contracts, including the procurement of goods, various services, and civil engineering works.
- **Reason for Intervention:** The disruption in global supply chains, rising freight costs, and logistical hurdles caused by the conflict have made it difficult for vendors to adhere to original delivery and completion schedules.
- **Fiscal Prudence:** By granting these extensions, the government aims to prevent the litigation and financial insolvency of firms that are crucial for the implementation of national infrastructure and developmental projects.
- **Standard Procedure:** The invocation is not automatic; contractors must formally request the extension and demonstrate how the specific West Asia crisis has directly impacted their ability to fulfill the contractual obligations.

Key Definitions & Concepts

- **Force Majeure:** A French term meaning "greater force." It refers to a common clause in contracts which essentially frees both parties from liability or obligation when an extraordinary event or circumstance beyond their control occurs.
- **Government Procurement:** The process by which public authorities, such as government departments or local authorities, purchase work, goods, or services from companies.
- **Liquidated Damages:** A pre-determined amount of money that must be paid as damages for a breach of contract, which the government is temporarily waiving under this extension.



Ministry of Finance
Government of India

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Section 56 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872:** While the term "Force Majeure" is not explicitly defined in the Act, the doctrine of frustration of contract under Section 56 provides the legal basis for an agreement becoming impossible to perform.
- **General Financial Rules (GFR), 2017:** These rules govern the public procurement process in India. Rule 173 and subsequent guidelines typically include provisions for FM to handle unforeseen disruptions in the supply chain.
- **Article 299 of the Constitution:** Deals with "Contracts," stating that all contracts made in the exercise of the executive power of the Union or of a State shall be expressed to be made by the President or the Governor.

Additional Key Points for Analysis

- **Supply Chain Resilience:** This move highlights India's vulnerability to West Asian volatility, especially concerning the import of critical raw materials, components, and energy-related logistics.



- **Precedent from COVID-19:** The government had previously invoked FM during the 2020 pandemic. The current move signifies that the West Asia crisis is being viewed with similar economic gravity.
- **Impact on Infrastructure:** Key sectors like defense, telecommunications, and heavy industries (where many components are sourced via the Middle East) are expected to be the primary beneficiaries of this relief.

Conclusion

The government's decision to allow Force Majeure is a pragmatic step towards maintaining the ease of doing business during global turmoil. By providing a four-month cushion, the Centre is absorbing part of the systemic risk, thereby preventing a cascade of project failures. However, long-term stability will require a strategic diversification of supply chains to reduce reliance on geographically sensitive chokepoints.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Important aspects of governance, transparency, and accountability; Government policies and interventions for development.
- **General Studies III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, and growth; Infrastructure development and project management.
- **Prelims:** Definition of Force Majeure; Indian Contract Act, 1872 provisions; GFR 2017 basics.

7. ISRO's Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV): Commercial Pivot 2026-27

- **Commercial Ramp-up:** After successful development and trial phases, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set for a milestone year with five planned commercial missions of the Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) in FY27.
- **Strategic Objective:** The SSLV is specifically designed to cater to the burgeoning global market for small satellites, offering "on-demand" launch services to Low Earth Orbit (LEO) with minimal turnaround time and infrastructure.
- **Economic Projections:** India's space economy, currently valued at approximately \$8.4 billion (2% of the global market), is projected to grow to \$44 billion by 2033, aiming for an 8% global market share through such commercial ventures.
- **Private Sector Participation:** Mirroring the global "NewSpace" trend, two Indian private startups are also expected to launch their inaugural commercial small rocket missions in the current fiscal, signaling a shift toward a more inclusive domestic space ecosystem.
- **Cost-Effectiveness:** Small rockets are increasingly preferred by telecommunications (e.g., SpaceX, OneWeb) and surveillance firms as they allow for the deployment of satellite constellations in LEO at a fraction of the cost and risk associated with heavy-class launchers.
- **Technological Maturation:** This move comes nearly a decade after the SSLV's inception and over two years since its last successful trial (SSLV-D2), marking the vehicle's transition from an experimental platform to a reliable commercial workhorse.





Key Definitions & Concepts

- **SSLV (Small Satellite Launch Vehicle):** A three-stage all-solid vehicle with a capability to launch up to 500kg satellite mass into a 500km planar orbit.
- **Low Earth Orbit (LEO):** An orbit relatively close to Earth's surface, typically at an altitude of less than 1,000 km but as low as 160 km above Earth, ideal for communication and remote sensing.
- **On-Demand Launch:** A service model where a rocket can be integrated and launched within a very short notice period (72 hours for SSLV), compared to months for larger rockets like PSLV or GSLV.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51A(h):** Part of the Fundamental Duties, it encourages the development of scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform.
- **Space Policy 2023:** A landmark policy framework that enables end-to-end participation of Non-Government Entities (NGEs) in all domains of space activities, including building rockets and satellites.
- **IN-SPACe (Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center):** An autonomous agency under the Department of Space created to permit and oversee the activities of private enterprises in the space sector.
- **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL):** The commercial arm of ISRO, incorporated in 2019, which is primarily responsible for the commercial exploitation of ISRO's research and development.

Additional Key Points for Analysis

- **Market Dynamics:** The shift toward "Nano" and "Micro" satellites (weighing between 1kg to 100kg) has created a supply-demand gap that the SSLV is uniquely positioned to fill due to its low launch cost.
- **Global Positioning:** By streamlining SSLV launches, India aims to compete with international players like Rocket Lab's Electron, positioning itself as a cost-efficient global hub for satellite launches.
- **Resource Optimization:** Unlike the PSLV, which requires a large team and specialized assembly building, the SSLV can be assembled by a handful of people in a few days, allowing ISRO to focus its larger resources on deep-space missions like Gaganyaan and Chandrayaan.

Conclusion

ISRO's transition of the SSLV to a full-scale commercial phase marks a significant evolution in India's space strategy. By fostering a dual-track approach—where ISRO leads on heavy-lift and scientific missions while enabling commercial success in the small-launch segment—India is moving toward becoming a dominant player in the global space economy. The success of these five missions will be a litmus test for the reliability of Indian space technology in a competitive international marketplace.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies III:** Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; Achievements of Indians in science & technology; Indigenization of technology and developing new technology.
- **General Studies II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.



- **Prelims:** Specifications of SSLV vs. PSLV; Roles of NSIL and IN-SPACE; India's target share in the global space economy.

9. India's 2026 Monsoon Outlook and Economic Implications

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has forecast a timely arrival of the southwest monsoon over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands between May 14 and 16, 2026. This development is critical as the domestic economy faces inflationary pressures from the ongoing West Asia conflict and rising global commodity prices. While retail inflation rose to **3.4%** in March 2026, it remains within the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) medium-term target. Above-normal rainfall in May, estimated at over **110%** of the Long Period Average (LPA), is expected to bolster soil moisture and facilitate early sowing for the kharif season.

Key Highlights for Civil Services Exam

- **Monsoon Onset and Coverage:** The southwest monsoon is likely to hit the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by mid-May, marking the commencement of India's four-month rainfall season.
- **Agricultural Impact:** Agriculture accounts for approximately **15–16% of India's GDP** and supports nearly **46% of the workforce**, making rainfall a primary driver of rural demand.
- **Inflation Dynamics:** Food and energy price spikes due to the West Asia war have pushed retail inflation from **3.21%** (February) to **3.4%** (March), though it stays below the RBI's **4%** anchor.
- **GDP Growth Projections:** Economists estimate that a favorable monsoon can contribute an additional **20–40 basis points** to the national GDP growth, currently projected between **6.5% and 6.8%** for FY27.
- **Climate Variables:** While May rainfall is expected to be above normal, IMD is monitoring **ENSO-neutral** conditions which may evolve into **El Niño** later in the season, potentially impacting long-term yields.
- **Rural Consumption:** Strong rainfall translates to higher farm incomes, which "crowds in" demand for fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and automobiles in rural markets.



Important Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Interpreted by courts to include the **Right to Food and Clean Environment**, both of which are intrinsically linked to successful monsoon cycles and agricultural stability.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Leveraged by the government during monsoon deficits to prevent hoarding and regulate the supply of pulses and cereals to control food inflation.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Provides the legal framework for drought relief and the management of "monsoon-induced" disasters like floods or landslides.

Key Definitions

- **Long Period Average (LPA):** The average rainfall recorded over a particular region for a specific long period (currently 1971–2020), used as a benchmark to describe the "normality" of a monsoon.
- **Kharif Season:** The cropping season in India that coincides with the onset of the southwest monsoon (June–October), involving crops like paddy, maize, pulses, and oilseeds.



- **Basis Points (bps):** A unit of measure for interest rates and other percentages in finance. One basis point is equal to **1/100th of 1% (0.01%)**.

Conclusion

The 2026 monsoon onset holds the key to India's "Goldilocks" economic scenario—balancing growth with manageable inflation. While global geopolitical risks in West Asia threaten to export inflation through energy channels, a robust domestic harvest can act as a natural hedge. However, the potential emergence of El Niño later in the year remains a lurking risk that policymakers must address through proactive buffer stock management.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I (Geography):** Mechanism and onset of the Southwest Monsoon; impact of climate phenomena like El Niño/La Niña on Indian weather.
- **GS Paper III (Economy & Agriculture):** Linkage between agriculture and GDP; inflation targeting by the RBI; food security and supply chain management amid global conflicts.

10. Sikkim: India's First Paperless State Judiciary

- **Pioneering Milestone:** Chief Justice of India Surya Kant has officially declared Sikkim as the first state in the country to achieve a completely paperless judiciary, marking a transformative shift in India's legal landscape.
- **Overcoming Geographical Barriers:** The integration of technology is specifically designed to dismantle constraints posed by Sikkim's difficult Himalayan terrain, where unpredictable weather and narrow paths previously made physical access to courts a "test of endurance".
- **Digital Ecosystem Transition:** The move signifies a departure from the era of the "paper trail," where vital legal records were often languishing in physical storage, moving instead toward a vibrant and accessible digital ecosystem.
- **Practical Necessity for Rule of Law:** Judicial digital reform is characterized not merely as a theoretical enhancement but as a practical necessity essential for sustaining the rule of law and ensuring justice is not delayed by distance or financial barriers.
- **Impact of e-Courts Project:** The Chief Justice noted that the e-Courts project has fundamentally rewritten the relationship between the litigant and the law, replacing toilsome physical inquiry with a simple, efficient digital interface.
- **National Conclave Context:** This declaration was made during the inaugural session of a two-day National Conclave on Technology and Judicial Education held in Gangtok, emphasizing the role of digital literacy in modernizing the courts.



Key Definitions & Concepts

- **Paperless Court:** A judicial environment where all processes—including filing, tracking, and record-keeping—are handled digitally, eliminating the need for physical documents.



- **e-Courts Project:** A mission-mode project aimed at transforming the Indian Judiciary by ICT enablement of courts, enhancing efficiency and accessibility for litigants.
- **ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in Judiciary:** The application of digital tools like video conferencing, e-filing, and digital databases to streamline legal proceedings.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The Right to Life and Personal Liberty has been interpreted by the Supreme Court to include the "Right to a Speedy Trial" and "Access to Justice," which are facilitated by digital court systems.
- **Article 39A:** A Directive Principle of State Policy that mandates the State to ensure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice on a basis of equal opportunity and provides free legal aid.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Provides the primary legal framework in India for electronic governance by giving legal recognition to electronic records and digital signatures.

Additional Key Points for Analysis

- **Financial Inclusivity:** Digital processes reduce the financial burden on litigants who previously had to spend significant resources on travel and physical documentation.
- **Data Security & Privacy:** As judiciaries go paperless, the focus shifts to robust cybersecurity measures to protect sensitive legal data and maintain the integrity of judicial records.
- **Judicial Education:** The success of such initiatives depends heavily on the continuous training of judges, lawyers, and court staff to navigate evolving digital platforms effectively.

Conclusion

Sikkim's transition to a paperless judiciary serves as a blueprint for the rest of India, demonstrating that technological intervention can effectively neutralize even the most challenging geographical constraints. By turning the "toilsome inquiry" into a "simple digital interface," this reform ensures that the reach of justice is determined by the speed of the internet rather than the difficulty of the terrain. Moving forward, the national challenge will be to replicate this model across states while bridging the digital divide among rural litigants.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II:** Structure, organization, and functioning of the Judiciary; Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; e-governance applications and models.
- **General Studies III:** Challenges to internal security through communication networks; Role of media and social networking sites in security challenges; Basics of cybersecurity.
- **Prelims:** e-Courts Integrated Mission Mode Project; National Conclave on Technology and Judicial Education; Landmark judgments related to the Right to Justice.

11. Addressing the Heatwave Crisis: Moving Beyond Short-Term Relief

- **Intensifying Climate Risk:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned that the 2026 summer may see an above-normal frequency of heatwave days, underscoring that heatwaves are "slow-onset" disasters requiring sustained planning rather than just emergency response.



- **Institutional Evolution:** While many regions have implemented Heat Action Plans (HAPs) focusing on early warnings and public advisories, there is a critical need to transition from these reactive measures to long-term sustainable urban cooling strategies.
- **Fiscal Breakthrough:** A landmark recommendation by the 16th Finance Commission proposes including heatwaves as "nationally notified disasters," which significantly expands the fiscal space for states to access the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF).
- **Structural Vulnerabilities:** Current policy frameworks often overlook the root causes of heat vulnerability, such as poor urban design, heat-absorbing construction materials, diminishing green cover, and unequal access to thermal comfort.
- **Call for Holistic Vision:** The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) is urged to lead a comprehensive framework that integrates climate-sensitive planning, green and blue infrastructure expansion, and sustainable cooling solutions into urban development.
- **Building Local Capacity:** Effective fund utilization requires strengthening institutional capacity at the local government level, ensuring better coordination between urban planning departments and disaster management institutions.



Key Definitions & Concepts

- **Heat Action Plan (HAP):** A comprehensive guide that outlines immediate and long-term steps to prepare for, respond to, and recover from heatwaves through inter-agency coordination.
- **Slow-Onset Disaster:** Natural hazards that unfold over days, weeks, or even years, such as heatwaves or droughts, necessitating different management strategies compared to sudden events like cyclones.
- **Green and Blue Infrastructure:** Urban design elements involving vegetation (green) and water bodies (blue) that help mitigate the "Urban Heat Island" effect through natural cooling.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** The primary legal framework for disaster management in India; the proposed inclusion of heatwaves as a notified disaster under this Act would formalize state and central responsibilities.
- **16th Finance Commission:** A constitutional body under Article 280 that recommends the distribution of financial resources; its recent recommendation on disaster classification alters how states fund climate resilience.
- **Article 21:** The Right to Life increasingly encompasses the right to a healthy environment, placing a positive obligation on the State to protect citizens from extreme climate events.
- **Entry 23 (Concurrent List):** Social security and social insurance; employment and unemployment, often linked to the protection of outdoor workers during heatwaves.

Additional Key Points for Analysis

- **Urban Heat Island (UHI) Effect:** Urban areas experience significantly higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas due to human activity and heat-retaining infrastructure.



- **Fiscal Shift:** Previously, states could only use up to 10% of their State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for localized disasters; national notification allows for larger, more flexible funding for long-term mitigation.
- **Inter-departmental Coordination:** Effective heat management requires a "whole-of-government" approach involving health, labor, urban development, and transport sectors.

Conclusion

The potential classification of heatwaves as a national disaster is a pivotal moment for India's climate policy. It provides the necessary financial leverage to move from mere relief to proactive resilience. However, the ultimate success of this shift depends on whether the NDMA and local governments can translate these funds into structural changes—such as cooler building designs and expanded urban forests—to ensure that Indian cities remain habitable in an era of global boiling.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies I:** Important Geophysical phenomena (Heatwaves); Changes in critical geographical features and their effects.
- **General Studies II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies (Finance Commission, NDMA); Government policies and interventions for development.
- **General Studies III:** Disaster and disaster management; Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.
- **Prelims:** Criteria for heatwaves in India; Composition and functions of the Finance Commission; NDRF vs. SDRF funding mechanisms.

12. Digital Reforms in Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2026

- **Notification of Amendments:** The Union Home Ministry has officially notified the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2026, which introduce significant changes to the Citizenship Rules, 2009, primarily focusing on digitizing various administrative processes.
- **Restriction on Minor Passports:** A critical new proviso has been added for citizenship applicants, strictly mandating that a minor child cannot hold an Indian passport while simultaneously holding a passport of any other country.
- **Birth Registration Protocols:** Under the 2009 Rules, applications for registering the birth of a minor child born outside India must be submitted to the relevant Indian consulate accompanied by a declaration that the child holds no foreign passport.
- **Digital Shift for OCI:** The 2026 amendments introduce a comprehensive online framework for Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders, including digital portals for applications and the renunciation process.
- **Centralized Service Portal:** The government has operationalized the official portal, <https://ociservices.gov.in>, to serve as a single-window interface for OCI-related digital initiatives.
- **Modernization of Processes:** These changes represent a strategic shift by the Centre to streamline the Indian legal landscape from traditional paper-based trails to a more vibrant and efficient digital ecosystem.



Key Definitions & Concepts

- **OCI (Overseas Citizen of India):** A specialized immigration status permitting a foreign citizen of Indian origin to live and work in India indefinitely.
- **Citizenship Renunciation:** The formal act of voluntarily giving up one's citizenship, which the 2026 rules have now digitized for greater transparency and speed.
- **Proviso:** A condition or qualification attached to a legal document or rule that provides specific requirements that must be met.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 5 to 11:** These constitutional articles deal with citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution and grant Parliament the power to regulate the right of citizenship by law.
- **Citizenship Act, 1955:** The primary legislation governing the acquisition and termination of Indian citizenship, under which the Citizenship Rules, 2009 and 2026 are framed.
- **Article 9:** Specifically prohibits dual citizenship, stating that no person shall be a citizen of India if they have voluntarily acquired the citizenship of any foreign State.
- **Article 11:** Empowers Parliament to make any provision with respect to the acquisition and termination of citizenship and all other matters relating to citizenship.

Additional Key Points for Analysis

- **Emphasis on Singularity:** The specific mention of minor children and foreign passports reinforces India's strict stance against dual citizenship, even for minors.
- **Ease of Governance:** Moving the OCI application and renunciation process online aligns with the broader "Digital India" mission, reducing bureaucratic delays and physical barriers for the diaspora.
- **Security and Tracking:** Digital applications allow the Home Ministry to maintain more accurate and real-time records of OCI cardholders and citizenship changes.

Conclusion

The 2026 amendments to the Citizenship Rules represent a modernization of India's demographic and legal administration. By integrating digital solutions for OCI cardholders and tightening passport regulations for minors, the government is balancing the "Ease of Living" for the Indian diaspora with the constitutional mandate against dual citizenship. This transition reflects a practical necessity in a globalized world where vital records must be accessible and secure within a vibrant digital ecosystem.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, and significant provisions; Government policies and interventions for development.
- **GS Paper III:** Challenges to internal security through communication networks; Role of media and social networking sites in security challenges (digital tracking).
- **Prelims:** Provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955; Distinction between NRI, PIO, and OCI; Constitutional articles related to citizenship (Part II).