



“ We help you reach for the star ”

VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 18/05/2026 (MONDAY)



9972258970 & 9740702455

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



Table of Contents

1. Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026.....	2
2. Prime Minister's Visit to Norway and the Third India-Nordic Summit.....	3
3. WHO Declaration of Ebola Outbreak as a PHEIC.....	4
4. Geographical and Hydrological Profile of the Tungabhadra River.....	6
5. India-Nordic Strategic Framework and the Geopolitics of the Arctic.....	7
6. Geopolitical Assessment of the U.S.-China Presidential Summit (May 2026).....	9
7. India-Netherlands Relations Elevated to Strategic Partnership.....	11
8. Why Excess Solar is Pushing India's Power Prices to Zero.....	13
9. As Rupee Stares at 100 to a Dollar, Lessons from Artificial Stabilization.....	15
10. Govt Plugs Cost Escalation Loophole in Jal Jeevan Mission Guidelines.....	17
11. India's Nationwide HPV Immunization Campaign and Public Health Challenges.....	19
12. Great Nicobar Megaproject: Legal and Tribal Rights Challenges in the High Court.....	21



VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026

- **Ordinance Promulgation:** President Droupadi Murmu has promulgated the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Ordinance, 2026, under Article 123 of the Constitution, following a Union Cabinet proposal to increase the apex court's judicial strength.
- **Judicial Strength Revision:** The ordinance amends Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956, replacing "thirty-three" with "thirty-seven", thereby increasing the sanctioned strength of judges from 33 to 37 (excluding the Chief Justice of India), making the total sanctioned strength 38.
- **Tackling Case Pendency:** The immediate objective of this legislative intervention is to address the severe crisis of pendency and backlogs plaguing the apex court, which currently stands at over 93,000 cases, aggravated significantly post-COVID-19 due to the rise of e-filing.
- **Constitutional Validity & Lifespan:** Issued when Parliament is not in session, the ordinance will be placed before both Houses upon reassembly; it will lapse six weeks from the date of reassembly unless passed, or earlier if resolutions disapproving it are passed by both Houses.
- **Executive Prerogative:** The notification underscores that the President was satisfied that circumstances existed requiring immediate action, though the President retains the constitutional authority to withdraw the ordinance at any given time.

Key Definitions

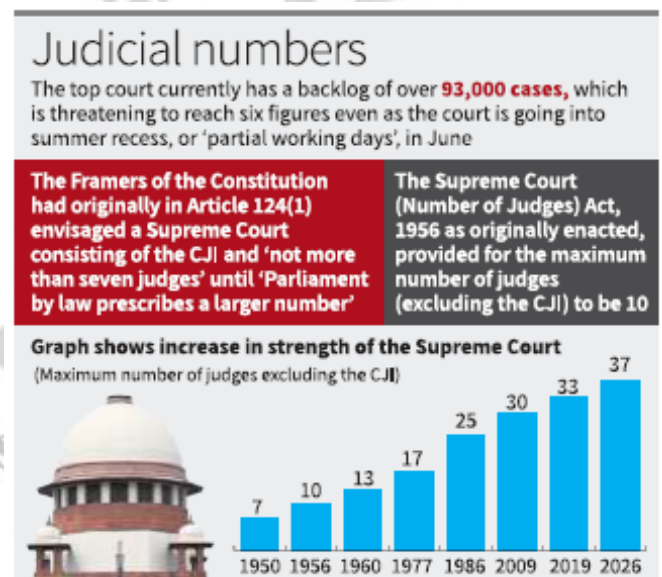
- **Ordinance:** A temporary law promulgated by the President of India (under Article 123) or the Governor of a State (under Article 213) when the legislature is not in session, possessing the same force and effect as an Act of Parliament.
- **Sanctioned Judicial Strength:** The maximum number of judges permitted by law to sit on a court at any given time, as determined by statutory amendments passed by the Parliament.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 124(1):** Empowers Parliament to prescribe the strength of the Supreme Court. It states there shall be a Supreme Court of India consisting of a Chief Justice of India and, until Parliament by law prescribes a larger number, of not more than seven other Judges.
- **Article 123:** Grants the President the power to promulgate ordinances during the recess of Parliament if immediate action is deemed necessary.
- **Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956:** The base statute used by Parliament to regulate and periodically increase the number of Supreme Court judges (originally 8 in 1950, and progressively increased to 31 in 2009, 34 in 2019, and now 38 in 2026).

Additional Keypoints

- **The Six-Week Rule:** An ordinance must be approved by Parliament within six weeks of its reassembly, establishing a maximum potential lifespan of six months and six weeks if Parliament's recess hits the maximum constitutional limit.





- **Judicial Pendency Factors:** The explosion of cases is attributed to the rise of institutional e-filing, increased PILs, appeals against high court orders, and a lack of dedicated structural benches (like a separate Constitutional Bench vs. a Court of Appeal).

Conclusion

The enhancement of the Supreme Court's judicial strength via the 2026 Ordinance reflects a necessary structural expansion to combat the judicial backlog of 93,000 cases. While increasing judge strength is a positive step toward ensuring timely justice, long-term efficiency requires parallel reforms in judicial infrastructure, the establishment of regional benches, and streamlined case management systems.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance and Polity):** Structure, organization, and functioning of the Judiciary; Executive discretion and legislative powers of the President (Ordinance-making power under Article 123); Separation of powers between the Executive, Legislature, and Judiciary.
- **Prelims Focus:** Article 123 provisions, maximum lifespan of an ordinance, parliamentary control over ordinances, and the parent statute governing Supreme Court judge strength (Act of 1956).

2. Prime Minister's Visit to Norway and the Third India-Nordic Summit

- **Historic Bilateral Milestone:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Oslo marks the first bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Norway in 43 years, aimed at elevating cooperation with one of the world's leading oil, gas, and green technology exporters.
- **The 3rd India-Nordic Summit:** The visit features the high-level India-Nordic Summit in Oslo, convening leaders from all five Nordic nations (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, and Denmark) to revive multilateral cooperation after the previous year's summit was cancelled due to regional security escalations.
- **Core Agenda of Trade and Energy:** Bilateral dialogues with Norwegian PM Jonas Gahr Støre and a dedicated business summit focus on expanding market access, securing energy supply chains, and driving technological collaborations in renewable energy and the blue economy.
- **Geopolitical Consultations:** Amid shifting global dynamics, both bilateral and multilateral tracks include critical strategic discussions on ongoing international conflicts, specifically focusing on the situations in Ukraine, Iran, and Gaza.
- **Institutional Deliverables:** To formalize and accelerate the momentum of the updated partnership, India and Norway are scheduled to sign three comprehensive government-to-government Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) across key sectors.



Key Definitions

- **Nordic Countries:** A geographical and cultural region in Northern Europe consisting of five sovereign states: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, along with their associated territories.



- **Blue Economy:** The sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem—a core pillar of India-Norway maritime cooperation.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 of the Constitution:** Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) mandate that the State shall endeavor to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law.
- **Article 73 of the Constitution:** Extends the executive power of the Union to matters with respect to which Parliament has power to make laws, providing the constitutional basis for the executive to negotiate, sign, and conclude international treaties and MoUs.

Additional Keypoints

- **Strategic Shift to the North:** India's engagement with the Nordic region highlights an Arctic and sub-Arctic focus, aligning with India's Arctic Policy which emphasizes scientific research, climate monitoring, and sustainable resource cooperation.
- **Parallel Strategic Upgrades:** Alongside the Norway visit, India has upgraded its bilateral ties with the Netherlands to a "Strategic Partnership," concluding 17 pacts and MoUs to deepen economic and technological integration with Western Europe.

Conclusion

The Prime Minister's landmark visit to Norway and the resumption of the India-Nordic Summit signify India's calibrated diversification of its European partnerships. By anchoring ties in energy security, advanced green technologies, and high-level geopolitical dialogue, India strengthens its footprint in Northern Europe while building robust, resilient supply chains vital for its domestic economic transformation.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **Prelims Focus:** Map locations of Nordic states, European maritime borders, Baltic and Arctic councils, and India's Arctic Policy objectives.

3. WHO Declaration of Ebola Outbreak as a PHEIC

- **Emergency Declaration:** The World Health Organization (WHO) has officially declared the current Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and neighboring Uganda as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).
- **Epidemiological Risk Profile:** Triggered after more than 300 suspected cases and 88 fatalities, the declaration follows a laboratory-confirmed case in Congo's capital, Kinshasa, located nearly 1,000 kilometers from the initial epicenter in Ituri province, signaling significant internal transmission risks.
- **Rare Pathogen Variant:** The current outbreak is driven by the rare Bundibugyo virus variant of the Ebola disease, which presents an escalated global health challenge as there are currently no approved therapeutics or targeted vaccines available for this specific strain.



- **Border and Travel Advisory:** Contrasting with the policy measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, the WHO has explicitly advised against the closure of international borders, stating that the outbreak does not meet the specific criteria of a global pandemic emergency.
- **Criteria for Global Emergency:** Under WHO standards, classifying an outbreak as a PHEIC denotes that the health event is highly serious, carries an active risk of international cross-border spread, and fundamentally demands a strictly coordinated international medical response.

Key Definitions

- **Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC):** An extraordinary health event determined under the International Health Regulations (IHR) to constitute a public health risk to other states through the international spread of disease, requiring a coordinated international response.
- **Bundibugyo Virus:** One of the six known species of the genus Ebolavirus; it is a rare variant that causes severe hemorrhagic fever in humans and possesses distinct antigenic properties compared to the more common Zaire or Sudan strains.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

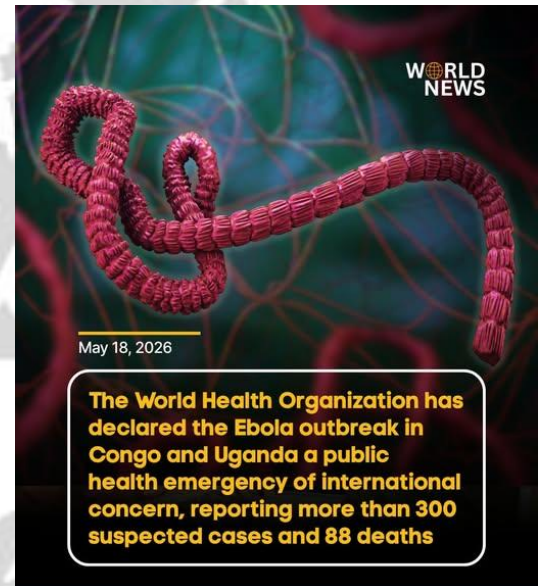
- **International Health Regulations (IHR 2005):** A legally binding instrument of international law that requires WHO member states to report specific disease outbreaks and public health events to help prevent and respond to acute public health risks.
- **Article 21 of the Indian Constitution:** The Right to Life has been judicially interpreted by the Supreme Court of India to encompass the right to public health and access to medical care, placing an obligation on the state to implement biosafety and quarantine protocols against international pathogens.

Additional Keypoints

- **Transmission Dynamics:** Ebola is an intensely contagious zoonotic disease contracted through direct contact with infected bodily fluids (blood, saliva, vomit, semen). Its high case fatality rate makes rapid containment at the epicenter essential.
- **The Surveillance Challenge:** The discovery of cases in a densely populated transport hub like Kinshasa highlights structural vulnerabilities in regional contact tracing, public health infrastructure, and border-zone bio-surveillance across Central Africa.

Conclusion

The WHO's designation of the Bundibugyo Ebola outbreak as a PHEIC serves as an urgent call for international resource mobilization and scientific collaboration to develop targeted therapeutics. For nations globally, it emphasizes the continuous need for robust epidemiological surveillance, rapid response mechanisms, and strict compliance with global health protocols to contain lethal localized outbreaks before they escalate cross-border.



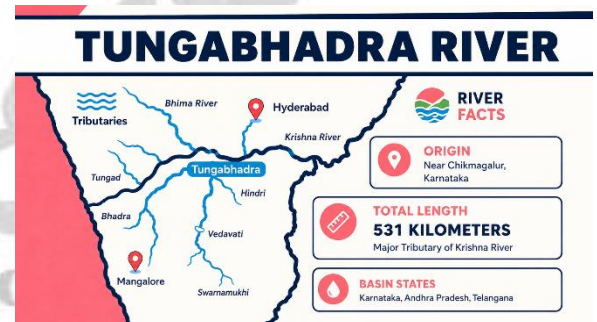


UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Science and Technology / Health):** Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-technology, and Bio-technology; Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.
- **Prelims Focus:** Mechanisms of viral transmission, definitions of endemic vs. epidemic vs. pandemic vs. PHEIC, geography of Central Africa (DRC, Uganda, Kinshasa), and the operational structure of the World Health Organization.

4. Geographical and Hydrological Profile of the Tungabhadra River

- **Point of Origin:** The Tungabhadra River is formed by the confluence of two sacred rivers, the Tunga and the Bhadra, which originate at Gangamoola in the Varaha Parvata of the Western Ghats (Chikkamagaluru district, Karnataka). The two streams flow down independently and merge at Koodli near Shimoga city to form the unified Tungabhadra River.
- **Course and River Mouth:** From Koodli, the river flows primarily in a northeastern direction across the Deccan Plateau, traversing roughly 531 kilometers. It serves as a natural boundary between states before reaching its final fall, where it empties into the Krishna River (as its largest right-bank tributary) at Sangamaleshwaram near Gundimalla village on the border of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- **Left-Bank Tributaries:** The northern or left-bank drainage system of the river is primarily fed by the Tunga River (prior to confluence), the Kumudvati River, and the prominent Varada River, which drains large parts of the Shimoga, Uttara Kannada, and Haveri districts.
- **Right-Bank Tributaries:** The southern or right-bank network is dominated by the Bhadra River (prior to confluence), the extensive Vedavathi River (also known as the Hagari River, flowing through Chitradurga and Bellary), and the Handri River in the lower reaches near Kurnool.
- **Catchment Area and Basin Size:** The Tungabhadra basin covers a total catchment area of approximately 71,417 square kilometers. The upper and middle catchment zones lie heavily within Karnataka (accounting for over 57,000 square kilometers), while the lower portion of the catchment spans across the semi-arid, drought-prone regions of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.



Key Definitions

- **Confluence:** The exact geographical point where two or more distinct bodies of water flow together to merge into a single, unified channel.
- **Doab:** A term used in South Asia for the tract of land lying between two confluent or parallel rivers, such as the strategic Raichur Doab situated between the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956:** Enacted under Article 262, this statute provides the legal framework for the central government to resolve water sharing disputes between riparian states via tribunals.



- **The Tungabhadra Board:** A statutory inter-state body established under the provisions of the Andhra State Act, 1953, tasked with regulating the water release, maintenance, and structural safety of the joint project works.

Additional Keypoints

- **Historical Significance:** The southern bank of the river served as the institutional and defense anchor for the medieval Vijayanagar Empire, with its UNESCO World Heritage site capital, Hampi, situated directly on its banks.
- **Monsoonal Regimen:** The river possesses a rain-fed perennial character heavily dependent on the South-West monsoon, leading to massive variations where summer discharge can drop significantly compared to peak monsoon inflows.

Conclusion

The Tungabhadra River stands out as a critical hydrological and lifeline component of the peninsular river system. Its vast catchment area and strategic position feeding into the Krishna River make understanding its tributaries, origin, and flow mechanics crucial for regional water management, agricultural sustainability, and resolving inter-state riparian sharing frameworks.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I (Geography):** Salient features of world's physical geography; Indian drainage systems, peninsular river networks, and river-linking concepts.
- **Prelims Focus:** Confluence points (Koodli, Sangamaleshwaram), specific identification of left-vs-right bank tributaries, historical linkages to the Vijayanagar architecture, and environmental traits of the Western Ghats origin zone.

5. India-Nordic Strategic Framework and the Geopolitics of the Arctic

- **Shifting Strategic Paradigm:** The Third India-Nordic Summit in Oslo (May 2026) marks a fundamental transition in India's engagement with Northern Europe, upgrading traditional focus areas like climate innovation and the blue economy into a deep geopolitical and security-oriented partnership.
- **Geopolitical Realignment in the High North:** The accession of Finland and Sweden to NATO has rewired the Nordic security architecture, leaving Russia as the sole non-NATO member of the Arctic Council, while a rising Russia-China axis introduces complex polar energy and shipping rivalries.
- **The Arctic as a Contested Theatre:** Once insulated from global friction, the Arctic is now a highly competitive arena for critical minerals, energy extraction, and new global maritime routes, driven by severe climate warming occurring at more than three times the global average rate.
- **Direct Ecological and Economic Stake:** For India, Arctic changes carry direct domestic consequences, as ice loss in the Barents-Kara Sea actively alters Indian summer monsoon variability, while accelerated polar melt directly threatens India's expansive coastline and port infrastructure.
- **Strategic Connectivity and Commercial Ambitions:** India seeks to balance its Arctic partnerships between Russia and the Nordic states by exploring the integration of the Northern Sea Route and the Chennai-Vladivostok corridor up to Murmansk, creating an alternative trans-polar trade link.
- **Policy Recommendations for India:** To anchor its northern footprint, India must appoint a dedicated Special Envoy for Arctic Affairs, establish an India-Arctic Economic Forum, build a



domestic fleet of ice-class tankers by 2030-31, and co-develop an Arctic-Himalaya Climate Data Corridor.

Key Definitions

- **Arctic Council:** A high-level intergovernmental forum established by the 1996 Ottawa Declaration to promote cooperation, coordination, and interaction among the Arctic States, indigenous communities, and other inhabitants on common Arctic issues.
- **High North:** A geopolitical term used primarily by Norway to describe the contiguous land and marine areas of the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions where resource management, environment, and security intersect.
- **Ice-Class Tanker:** A specialized merchant vessel reinforced with a thicker hull and structural framing designed to safely navigate through sea ice and sub-zero polar maritime conditions.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51(c) of the Constitution:** Directive Principles of State Policy mandate that the State shall endeavor to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organized peoples with one another.
- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** The overarching international legal framework governing maritime jurisdictions, deep-sea mining, navigation rights, and continental shelf claims in the Arctic Ocean.
- **The Svalbard Treaty (1920):** An international treaty recognizing the sovereignty of Norway over the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard, while granting signatory nations (including India, which signed in 1920) equal rights to commercial and scientific activities.

Additional Keypoints

- **India's Scientific Footprint:** India established its permanent Arctic research presence through the Himadri station (2008) at Ny-Alesund, Svalbard, supplemented by the IndARC multi-sensor underwater observatory (2014) and the Grubebadet atmospheric laboratory.
- **Supply Chain Diversification:** Nordic states offer critical alternatives to China's processing dominance, featuring Norway's deep-sea mining initiatives, Sweden's massive rare earth elements, and Denmark's strategic access via Greenland.
- **Complementary Clean Technology:** The partnership leverages asymmetric advantages; the Nordic region provides world-leading expertise in offshore wind, green hydrogen, and geothermal technology (highly relevant for India's Himalayan belt), while India offers unmatched engineering scale and market volume.



Conclusion

The transformation of India-Nordic relations underscores India's necessary "northward turn" in global statecraft. As environmental degradation opens up the Arctic to geopolitical contestation, a sustained strategic partnership with the Nordic nations allows India to secure its maritime logistics, diversify critical mineral supply chains, and gather essential climate data necessary to safeguard its domestic economic and ecological security.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India; Effect of policies of developed nations on India's strategic interests; Institutional structure of the Arctic Council.
- **GS Paper III (Environment & Disaster Management):** Climate change impacts, polar amplification, teleconnections affecting the Indian Monsoon, and deep-sea mining challenges.
- **Prelims Focus:** Location of the Barents-Kara Sea, member states of the Arctic Council, India's research stations (Himadri, IndARC), Svalbard Treaty provisions, and NATO expansion geography.

6. Geopolitical Assessment of the U.S.-China Presidential Summit (May 2026)

- **Initiation of a Diplomatic Thaw:** The state visit of U.S. President Donald Trump to Beijing on May 13-15, 2026, marks a critical attempt to establish a strategic "thaw" after nearly a decade of intense trade hostilities, structural decoupling, and aggressive retaliatory tariff escalations.
- **Geopolitical Drivers of the Summit:** The high-level dialogue was necessitated by cascading global crises, primarily an acute energy shock driven by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz during the ongoing U.S.-Iran conflict, alongside mounting cross-strait military friction over Taiwan's sovereignty.
- **Unprecedented Diplomatic Posturing:** Symbolizing an urgent mutual desire for escalation management, Beijing officially hosted U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio despite its own active sanctions against him, while Washington included its Secretary of War (Defense), Pete Hegseth, to stabilize military communications.
- **Economic Maneuvering and Market Access:** Facing upcoming mid-term elections and rising domestic inflation, the U.S. administration utilized a high-profile corporate delegation—including Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang—to negotiate expanded market access for high-end GPUs, agricultural commodities, and aerospace exports.
- **Symbolic vs. Substantive Outcomes:** While the summit concluded without any signed treaties or joint communiqués, it yielded verbal and transactional progress, with Beijing signaling a willingness to resume purchases of American soybeans, restore licenses for beef plants, and procure up to 200 Boeing aircraft.





- **Persistence of Fundamental Strategic Faults:** Despite the rhetoric of a constructive partnership, core structural frictions remain unresolved; President Xi Jinping explicitly warned of inevitable confrontation if the U.S. violates red lines on Taiwan, while President Trump maintained Washington's posture of strategic ambiguity.

Key Definitions

- **Decoupling:** A strategic economic policy aimed at fundamentally dismantling or reducing structural interdependencies, supply chains, and technology transfers between two deeply integrated national economies.
- **Strategic Ambiguity:** The deliberate practice by a sovereign state of being intentionally unclear about its precise course of action—specifically regarding military intervention—in the event of an armed conflict involving an ally.
- **Thucydides Trap:** A prominent geopolitical theory stating that when a rising power inspires dread in a well-established dominant power, the resulting structural stress makes military conflict and systemic war highly probable.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article II, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution:** Grants the Executive Branch the absolute authority to conduct foreign policy, receive foreign emissaries, and negotiate international treaties, subject to the advice and consent of the Senate.
- **Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 (U.S. Domestic Law):** A foundational statutory framework that legally mandates the United States to provide Taiwan with defensive weaponry and maintain the capacity to resist any resort to force that jeopardizes its security.
- **Three Joint Communiqués (1972, 1979, 1982):** Legal and historical diplomatic documents that underpin U.S.-China bilateral ties, acknowledging Beijing's "One China" principle while establishing modern diplomatic relations.

Additional Keypoints

- **The 'Three Bs' Strategy:** The American economic objective relied heavily on securing purchasing commitments for "beans, beef, and Boeing"—three sectors targeted by Beijing during previous tariff cycles to inflict targeted political pain on the U.S. agrarian and manufacturing heartland.
- **Diversification of Energy Routes:** Under the shadow of the West Asian conflict, China expressed intent to increase crude oil purchases from the U.S., aiming to mitigate its systemic vulnerability to disruptions at the Strait of Hormuz chokepoint.
- **Domestic Political Consolidation:** The high-visibility pageantry of the visit was leveraged by both leaders for domestic consumption; President Trump sought relief from climbing energy costs ahead of elections, while President Xi utilized it to signal stability amid internal party elite dynamics.

Conclusion

The May 2026 U.S.-China summit reflects a tactical pause rather than a fundamental resolution of the ongoing systemic rivalry. While transactional agreements on agriculture and aerospace offer temporary relief to global markets, the structural drivers of the Thucydides Trap—particularly regarding advanced semiconductor hegemony and the red line of Taiwanese sovereignty—will continue to dictate the volatile trajectory of major power relations.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's strategic and economic stability.
- **Prelims Focus:** Geography of global maritime chokepoints (Strait of Hormuz, Taiwan Strait), core tenets of U.S. and Chinese foreign policies, and geopolitical frameworks (Thucydides Trap, G2).

7. India-Netherlands Relations Elevated to Strategic Partnership

- **Diplomatic Relations Upgraded:** India and the Netherlands have officially elevated their bilateral relationship to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to The Hague, establishing a long-term roadmap for high-level diplomatic, security, and economic collaboration.
- **Institutional Deliverables:** The two nations signed 17 bilateral agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) across critical sectors, including water resources, high-tech agriculture, medical healthcare, renewable energy transition, and secured supply chains for critical minerals.
- **Semiconductor Collaborative Project:** A major highlight of the commercial deliverables includes a high-tech semiconductor fabrication project established between India's TATA Electronics and the world-leading Dutch photolithography manufacturer ASML, anchoring India's domestic electronics manufacturing ecosystem.
- **Friction Over Internal Governance:** Newly elected Dutch Prime Minister Rob Jetten raised domestic political concerns regarding press freedoms and minority rights in India; this prompted a firm diplomatic pushback from India's Ministry of External Affairs, citing a fundamental lack of understanding of India's pluralistic, democratic systems.
- **Consular and Transnational Legal Conflict:** The Dutch Prime Minister raised the sensitive, long-standing international child custody and abduction case of Dutch-born child Insiya, which has been sub judice since 2016; Indian diplomats acknowledged the discussion but abstained from public comment due to ongoing judicial processes.



Key Definitions

- **Strategic Partnership:** A formal, high-level diplomatic and economic framework between two sovereign states indicating deep institutional trust, frequent bilateral consultations, and synchronized policy actions on critical global and regional issues.
- **Photolithography / Semiconductor Fabrication:** A high-precision micro-fabrication process used to pattern parts of a thin film or the bulk of a substrate, a critical proprietary technology dominated by Dutch firm ASML that is essential for producing advanced microchips.



- **Sub Judice:** A legal term indicating that a particular case or matter is currently under judicial consideration, consequently restricting public discussion or executive interference to prevent bias in the court's final decision.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 of the Constitution:** Outlines the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) for promoting international peace and security, maintaining just and honorable relations between nations, and fostering respect for international treaty obligations.
- **Article 253 of the Constitution:** Grants Parliament the exclusive power to make laws for the entire country or any part of it for implementing any treaty, agreement, or convention signed with another country or international body.
- **The Hague Convention on Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (1980):** A multilateral treaty providing an expedited method to return a child internationally abducted by a parent from one member nation to another; notably, India is not a signatory to this specific convention, making bilateral consular tracks essential.

Additional Keypoints

- **The "WAH" Framework:** India and the Netherlands have successfully institutionalized their core areas of historical cooperation under the functional acronym "WAH", which systematically covers integrated Water resource management, advanced Agriculture practices, and joint Health research.
- **Energy Security and Global Chokepoints:** The bilateral dialogues explicitly addressed the global economic fallout from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz during the ongoing U.S.-Iran conflict, analyzing the severe impact of rising fuel costs on both European and Indian domestic consumer pricing.
- **Diaspora as a Living Bridge:** The Netherlands hosts one of the largest concentrations of the Indian diaspora in mainland Europe, including a unique population of Surinami-Hindustani citizens; New Delhi leveraged the visit to emphasize extended Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) eligibility up to the sixth generation.

Conclusion

The transformation of India-Netherlands ties into a Strategic Partnership marks a crucial step in India's broader European engagement. By pairing essential technology transfers—specifically ASML's semiconductor expertise—with historical cooperation in water and agriculture management, both nations have built a resilient, mutually beneficial matrix. While divergent views on domestic governance and consular human rights cases will require continuous, sensitive diplomatic navigation, the shared economic imperatives of secure global supply chains and clean energy transitions ensure a steady upward trajectory for bilateral ties.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Important international institutions and their structural impact; Effect of policies of developed countries on India's strategic autonomy.
- **GS Paper III (Economy and Science & Technology):** Indigenization of technology and developing new technology; Semiconductor manufacturing missions; Supply chain resilience.



- **Prelims Focus:** Geography of the Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt delta (Netherlands), location of major semiconductor supply chains, constitutional provisions of treaty implementation (Article 253), and international consular laws.

8. Why Excess Solar is Pushing India's Power Prices to Zero

Context and Core Phenomenon

The real-time market (RTM) of the Indian Energy Exchange (IEX) recently witnessed power prices slumping to zero during multiple trading sessions. Despite anticipation of high summer electricity demand, a structural mismatch between soaring daytime solar generation and inadequate grid-scale storage capacity has triggered this unprecedented pricing collapse.

Key Summary Points

- **Unprecedented Pricing Collapse:** Power prices on the IEX real-time market hit zero for the first time on 1 May, repeating the trend on 15 May, with frequent drops below ₹1 per unit during peak solar hours (11 AM to 3 PM).
- **Supply-Demand Mismatch:** India's solar capacity has expanded rapidly to 154.23 GW. However, the lack of proportional Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) prevents storing this daytime surplus for non-solar peak hours.
- **Must-Run Status Rigidities:** Renewable energy projects hold a statutory "must-run" status, meaning grid operators cannot curtail their generation arbitrarily, forcing excess power into the exchange even when demand is low.
- **Severe Financial Distress:** Zero-pricing leaves clean energy generators with no revenue for supplied electricity, while Distribution Companies (discoms) are forced to offload excess contracted power at a total loss, exacerbating their existing financial stress.
- **Policy Interventions:** The Union Government has mandated a 10% or 2-hour storage capacity for new solar projects and introduced a ₹5,400 crore Viability Gap Funding (VGF) scheme to develop 30 GWh of battery storage.
- **Global Precedents:** Developed markets like Germany, Australia, and the US utilize "negative electricity pricing"—where generators pay buyers to take power—to balance grid frequency during oversupply, a mechanism India is currently evaluating.



Definitions of Key Terms

- **Real-Time Market (RTM):** An organized market platform on power exchanges allowing buyers and sellers to trade electricity just one hour before actual delivery, helping discoms manage sudden demand-supply variations.
- **Must-Run Status:** A regulatory mandate ensuring that power from specified renewable energy sources must be purchased or scheduled by utilities under all conditions, protecting green generators from arbitrary curtailment.



- **Viability Gap Funding (VGF):** A capital subsidy provided by the government to infrastructure projects that are economically justified but lack financial viability due to high initial capital expenditure.
- **Negative Pricing:** A market condition where supply so grossly exceeds demand that electricity prices drop below zero, financially incentivizing consumers to increase loads to prevent grid destabilization.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Seventh Schedule (Concurrent List):** Electricity is a Concurrent List subject (Entry 38), meaning both the Parliament and State Legislatures can enact laws, requiring coordinated center-state action for grid management.
- **Electricity Act, 2003:** The foundational legal framework governing the generation, transmission, distribution, and trading of electricity in India. Section 66 of the Act mandates the promotion of development of market lines (including exchanges).
- **IEGC Regulations:** The Indian Electricity Grid Code (IEGC), formulated by the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC), provides the legal rules for grid discipline, scheduling, and the "must-run" enforcement.

Additional Strategic Keypoints

- **Grid Frequency Vulnerability:** Massive injections of unconsumed solar power can trip grid frequency, risking localized blackouts or transmission infrastructure damage.
- **Shift to Hybrid Bidding:** Renewable energy implementing agencies (like SECI) are pivoting away from standalone solar tenders toward Round-The-Clock (RTC) and storage-integrated hybrid renewable projects.
- **Supply Chain Localization:** The Ministry of Power is evaluating domestic content requirements for battery components to secure the green energy supply chain from external import shocks.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of zero-dollar power prices is a systemic wake-up call, indicating that India's renewable transition has outpaced its grid infrastructure. To prevent the distress sale of clean energy and protect the financial health of both generators and discoms, India must aggressively accelerate capital investment into grid-scale battery storage, refine weather-demand forecasting models, and introduce advanced market instruments like negative pricing.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Policy):** Government policies and interventions for development in the infrastructure sector; statutory bodies like CERC and grid regulations.
- **GS Paper III (Economic Development & Energy):** Infrastructure (Energy), renewable energy targets, mobilization of resources, and the financial viability of power distribution companies (discoms).
- **Key Themes:** Energy Security, Green Infrastructure, Market Integration, Climate Change Commitments (COP Target of 500 GW non-fossil capacity).



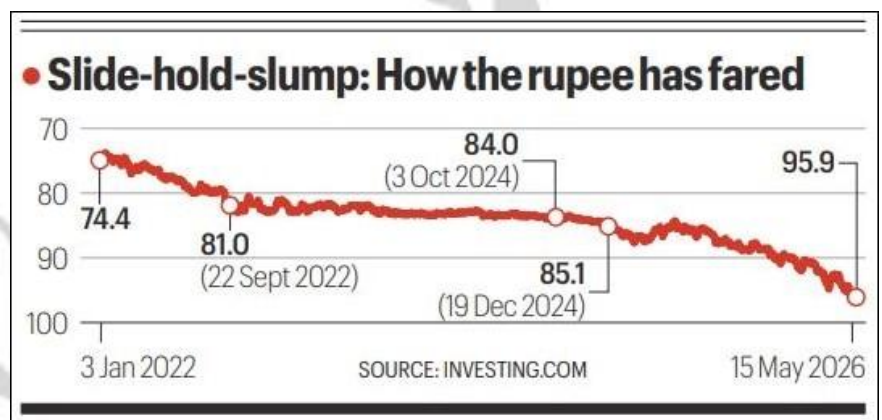
9. As Rupee Stares at 100 to a Dollar, Lessons from Artificial Stabilization

Context and Core Phenomenon

The Indian Rupee (INR) has hit a record low, breaching the 96-per-dollar mark and heading toward a psychological barrier of 100 per US Dollar (USD). A severe external shock from the West Asia crisis beginning in late February has triggered a sharp 5.2% depreciation. External internal deliberations among policymakers highlight a structural counter-effect: the intense "artificial stabilization" of the rupee at 82–83 levels managed by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) during 2023 and 2024 has effectively compressed fundamental depreciation pressures, which are now unravelling rapidly in a steep, volatile slide.

Key Summary Points

- **Record Depreciation Pressures:** The rupee has slumped past 95.9 per dollar (as of mid-May 2026), driven sharply by capital account pressures arising from the prolonged geopolitical crisis in West Asia.
- **The Cost of Artificial Stability:** During 2023 and 2024, the RBI aggressively intervened in the foreign exchange market to anchor the rupee within a narrow 82–83 band, burning through substantial foreign exchange reserves.
- **Delayed Market Pricing:** The current steep slide is an accumulation of deferred market adjustments; the forex market is now rapidly pricing in the depreciation that organically should have taken place during the earlier stabilization phase.
- **Diminishing Intervention Capabilities:** Policymakers admit that defending specific psychological exchange rate levels has limited efficacy now, as the sheer volume of global capital outflows outpaces sustainable central bank interventions.
- **Impact on Investor Sentiment:** Breaching the psychological threshold of 100 per dollar risks triggering a cascading effect on portfolio outflows, altering domestic inflation dynamics, and severely denting foreign investor sentiment.
- **Macroeconomic Backlash:** The current policy dilemma underscores how prolonged suppression of natural currency volatility can lead to sharper, more unmanageable currency shocks when external buffers face limits.



Definitions of Key Terms

- **Currency Depreciation:** A decrease in the value of a currency relative to another currency in a floating or managed floating exchange rate system, driven by market forces of supply and demand.
- **Artificial Stabilization:** Central bank actions involving heavy buying or selling of foreign currencies to intentionally limit the volatility of the domestic currency and keep it fixed within a narrow trading band.



- **Capital Account:** A component of a nation's Balance of Payments (BoP) that records all international economic transactions related to institutional or private investment, loans, banking, and capital transfers.
- **Forex Intervention:** The operational practice where a central bank buys or sells its own currency against foreign currencies to influence the exchange rate or stabilize disorderly market conditions.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Union List (Entry 36):** Under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, "Currency, coinage and legal tender; foreign exchange" falls exclusively under the Union List, empowering Parliament to legislate on external fiscal stability.
- **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934:** Mandates the RBI under Section 45W to regulate the financial markets, including foreign exchange markets, derivatives, and currency operations to ensure macroeconomic stability.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** The primary statutory framework facilitating external trade and payments, promoting the orderly development and maintenance of the foreign exchange market in India.

Additional Strategic Keypoints

- **Imported Inflation Risk:** A rapidly weakening rupee drastically increases India's crude oil import bill, worsening the current account deficit (CAD) and fueling domestic imported inflation.
- **External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs):** Indian corporate entities with unhedged foreign currency exposures face ballooning debt servicing costs as the value of the dollar climbs toward the 100 mark.
- **Real Effective Exchange Rate (REER) Divergence:** The artificial anchoring of the nominal exchange rate in 2023–2024 caused a divergence from the REER, making Indian exports less competitive globally due to an overvalued domestic currency.

Conclusion

The rupee's rapid correction toward the 100-per-dollar mark serves as a classic economic lesson on the limits of heavily managed exchange rates. While central bank intervention is vital to curb short-term, speculative volatility, prolonged artificial suppression of natural currency movements creates a pressure cooker effect. For long-term external stability, Indian policymakers must strike a calibrated balance between prudent intervention and allowing market-driven adjustments, reinforced by structural reforms that boost export competitiveness and attract stickier Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Indian Economy):** Issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, and development; Balance of Payments (BoP), external sector dynamics, and currency fluctuations.
- **GS Paper III (Monetary Policy & Infrastructure):** Role of the RBI, monetary policy transmission, forex reserve management, and inflation targeting amidst global geopolitical shocks.
- **Key Themes:** Exchange Rate Regimes (Floating vs. Managed), Foreign Exchange Reserves, Macroeconomic Stability, Impact of Geopolitics on Energy and Capital Accounts.



10. Govt Plugs Cost Escalation Loophole in Jal Jeevan Mission Guidelines

Context and Core Phenomenon

The Ministry of Jal Shakti has introduced new structural guidelines titled "Operational Guidelines Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 Har Ghar Jal" to govern the second phase of its flagship rural tap water scheme until 2028. The move explicitly reinstates a critical fiscal safeguard by categorizing "Tender Premium" back into the list of inadmissible expenses. This dynamic policy reversal rectifies a costly regulatory loophole created by a 2022 amendment, which had inadvertently allowed states to utilize central funds to absorb inflated project bids, causing an aggregate cost escalation of over ₹16,839 crore (a 14.58% surge from initial estimates) across thousands of rural water schemes.

Key Summary Points

- **Reinstatement of Fiscal Safeguards:** The Centre has officially placed "Tender Premium" back onto the list of inadmissible expenses under the updated Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM) 2.0 guidelines, plugging a massive public spending vulnerability.
- **The 2022 Regulatory Loophole:** In June 2022, the Ministry had deleted "Tender Premium" from the inadmissible expenses list, allowing states to clear bids that were 10–25% higher than government-approved estimates using central funding allocations.
- **Quantifiable Fiscal Distortion:** Data evaluations revealed that the 2022 rule dilution led to severe cost escalations totaling ₹16,839 crore across 14,586 independent piped water infrastructure projects nationwide.
- **Strict Cost Accountability on States:** Under the restored 2019 baseline framework, any cost escalation or bidding premium exceeding the officially sanctioned project cost must be borne entirely by the respective State or UT.
- **Cap on Service Level Standards:** The new guidelines strictly bar central financial support for any state water infrastructure design planned beyond the standard baseline norm of 55 Litres Per Capita Per Day (LPCD).
- **Comprehensive Inadmissible Registry:** Beyond procurement premiums, the updated rules explicitly forbid utilizing central JJM funds for land acquisition, purchasing administrative vehicles, staff salaries, building renovations, or routine operations and maintenance (O&M).



Definitions of Key Terms

- **Tender Premium:** The incremental or additional financial amount quoted by a commercial infrastructure bidder that exceeds the baseline cost estimated by the government's technical experts.
- **Inadmissible Expenses:** Specific categories of expenditure within a centrally sponsored scheme that are legally disqualified from receiving financial support from the central government's budgetary share.
- **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS):** Public welfare or infrastructure initiatives implemented by state governments but largely funded by the central government with a fixed cost-sharing ratio (e.g., 60:40 or 90:10).



- **Service Level Norm (JJM):** The targeted operational standard for water supply deployment under the mission, statutory fixed at 55 litres of potable water per individual per day through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC).

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Seventh Schedule (State List - Entry 17):** Water supplies, irrigation, canals, drainage, embankments, and water storage fundamentally fall under the legislative jurisdiction of individual States.
- **Seventh Schedule (Union List - Entry 56):** Empowers the Central Parliament to regulate and develop inter-state rivers and river valleys to the extent declared by law to be expedient in the public interest.
- **Article 282 of the Constitution:** Grants the Union or States the power to make discretionary financial grants for any public purpose, serving as the constitutional channel through which Centrally Sponsored Schemes are funded.

Additional Strategic Keypoints

- **Extension of Institutional Timelines:** Following an absolute Union Cabinet approval in March, the operational timeline of the Jal Jeevan Mission has been formalised and extended up to 2028.
- **Financial Oversight & Audit Audits:** The policy reversal emphasizes a growing shift toward stringent fiscal federalism, limiting the ability of state governments to divert dedicated central assets into regional schemes.
- **Data-Driven Policy Correction:** The dynamic policy revision illustrates the crucial role of open-source dashboard metrics and expenditure audits in identifying public procurement leakages in real-time.

Conclusion

The institutional rollout of the Jal Jeevan Mission 2.0 guidelines marks a vital step in enforcing public procurement discipline and financial transparency. By stripping away the provision for central absorption of tender premiums, the Union government has re-established a strict accountability framework for state execution machinery. This adjustment ensures that the massive financial outlays earmarked for rural water infrastructure are utilized optimally to meet the baseline target of 55 LPCD without burdening the exchequer with vendor-driven cost overruns.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Public Policy):** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions, and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these sections.
- **GS Paper III (Economic Development & Infrastructure):** Government budgeting, fiscal federalism, resource mobilization, and public infrastructure development (Water and Sanitation).
- **Key Themes:** Public Procurement Reforms, Accountability in Centrally Sponsored Schemes, Union-State Financial Relations, and Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).



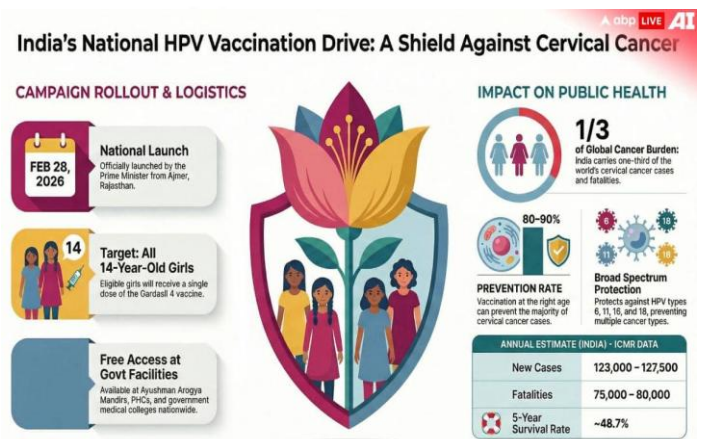
11. India's Nationwide HPV Immunization Campaign and Public Health Challenges

Context and Core Phenomenon

India has accelerated its nationwide public health campaign to administer the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine to 14-year-old girls, aiming to protect approximately 1.15 crore girls annually across all states and union territories. Following its launch on February 28, the campaign encountered an initially slow start due to vaccine hesitancy and institutional misinformation online. However, coordinated structural interventions by education and health authorities—including school-centric outreach and one-on-one parent counseling—have successfully triggered an upward momentum, with the national capital alone administering roughly 11,000 doses by mid-May.

Key Summary Points

- **Targeted Prophylactic Intervention:** The central public health initiative targets the systemic immunization of 14-year-old girls nationwide, intending to cover 1.15 crore individuals annually to significantly scale down India's cervical cancer vulnerabilities.
- **Severe Oncological Burden:** According to GLOBOCAN estimates, cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among Indian women, accounting for over 1.2 lakh new cases and nearly 80,000 deaths annually, disproportionately crippling low-income families.
- **Overcoming Vaccine Hesitancy:** Initial phases faced severe under-participation due to systemic vaccine hesitancy and targeted alarmist content circulating on social media platforms, which triggered operational anxieties among parent groups.
- **Multi-Sectoral Mobilization:** The operational turnaround was achieved by integrating local health teams, school principals, and frontline health workers, alongside international training support from the WHO and the UNDP.
- **Procurement Capabilities:** Vaccine accessibility has not been a binding constraint; the campaign primarily deploys adequate stocks of the quadrivalent HPV vaccine (such as Gardasil) within the national public health framework.
- **Grassroots Remediation Strategies:** To bypass social media misinformation algorithms, authorities pivoted to direct, decentralized interactions, parent-teacher counseling sessions, weekend vaccination drives, and public acknowledgments to build local community trust.



Definitions of Key Terms

- **Human Papillomavirus (HPV):** A widespread group of viruses transmitted through skin-to-skin contact, where persistent high-risk viral strains directly cause structural cellular changes leading to cervical cancer.
- **Quadrivalent Vaccine:** A type of vaccine formulated to stimulate a protective immune response against four distinct strains of an infectious agent or virus simultaneously.



- **Vaccine Hesitancy:** A behavioral phenomenon characterized by the delay in acceptance or absolute refusal of safe, approved vaccines despite the institutional availability of vaccination services.
- **Prophylactic Healthcare:** Strategic medical interventions, treatments, or immunizations designed explicitly to prevent a disease or infection from occurring, rather than treating its symptoms post-onset.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21 of the Constitution:** The fundamental Right to Life and Personal Liberty, which the Supreme Court has consistently interpreted to encapsulate the right to health, clean environment, and affordable medical care.
- **Article 47 (Directive Principles):** Explicitly mandates that the State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties.
- **Seventh Schedule (State List - Entry 6):** Assigns "Public health and sanitation; hospitals and dispensaries" to the state legislative domain, requiring close fiscal and logistical federal coordination for central campaigns.

Additional Strategic Keypoints

- **Digital Misinformation Barriers:** The campaign highlights a modern governance challenge where algorithmic amplification of unverified, alarmist health content directly slows down critical public infrastructure rollouts.
- **Universal Immunization Program (UIP):** Integrating the HPV vaccine into the broader matrix of India's UIP is considered vital for driving long-term, institutionalized reduction in reproductive tract malignancies.
- **Indigenous Vaccine Scaling:** Alongside imported variants, scaling cost-effective domestic formulations (like Cervavac developed by the Serum Institute of India) is critical for sustainable fiscal budgeting of the program.

Conclusion

The steady upward trajectory of India's HPV vaccination drive highlights the complex intersection of clinical availability and community trust in executing public health policy. Overcoming the initial operational hurdles caused by digital misinformation underscores that infrastructural supply lines alone cannot guarantee success. For India to sustainably diminish its immense cervical cancer burden, the structural framework of the campaign must continue combining robust vaccine supply chains with decentralized, school-centric awareness models that dismantle cultural and medical apprehensions at the grassroots level.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Social Justice & Governance):** Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health; government interventions to handle gender-specific disease burdens.
- **GS Paper III (Science and Technology):** Recent developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; biotechnology, indigenization of vaccines, and healthcare infrastructure.



- **Key Themes:** Preventive Healthcare Policies, Digital Governance and Misinformation Challenges, Women's Welfare and Reproductive Health, and Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being).

12. Great Nicobar Megaproject: Legal and Tribal Rights Challenges in the High Court Context and Core Phenomenon

The Calcutta High Court's Port Blair circuit bench has agreed to hear a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) challenging the ₹81,000-crore Great Nicobar Island (GNI) infrastructure megaproject. Filed by a former Union government secretary, the plea alleges extensive procedural violations of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA) in obtaining tribal consent for diverting 166.10 sq km of land. The court overruled preliminary objections by the Centre and local administration, bringing the critical balance between strategic defense-led infrastructure development and statutory tribal safeguards under intense judicial scrutiny.

Key Summary Points

- **Strategic Infrastructure Dimensions:** The ₹81,000-crore GNI integrated project encompasses an international transshipment container port, a greenfield dual-use military and civilian airport, a solar and gas-based power plant, and a coastal township.
- **Flawed Tribal Consent Process:** The petition contends that the process used to claim tribal consent for diverting forest land was legally invalid, failing to adhere to mandatory institutional rules established under the FRA.
- **Sub-Divisional Committee Inconsistencies:** The Sub-Divisional Level Committee (SDLC) for Campbell Bay allegedly lacked the mandated composition of at least two Scheduled Tribe (ST) members, including one woman member, having only a single Nicobarese representative instead.
- **Misrepresentation via Settler Panchayats:** Forest diversion resolutions were passed by Gram Sabhas in Campbell Bay, Govind Nagar, and Laxmi Nagar; however, the plea argues these are settler panchayats with no legal standing to give consent on behalf of STs or traditional forest dwellers.
- **Threat to Shompen Vulnerability:** The project area overlaps with the foraging and hunting grounds of the Shompen, a highly vulnerable uncontacted tribe. Their mandatory consent was allegedly simulated via an officer of a government organization rather than obtained from the community itself.
- **Unsettled Statutory Forest Claims:** Under a 2009 Environment Ministry directive and the FRA, all individual and community forest rights claims must be fully identified and settled prior to any administrative diversion of forest lands, which the plea alleges has not occurred.



Definitions of Key Terms

- **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs):** A sub-classification among Scheduled Tribes identified by the government as exhibiting extreme social, economic, and demographic vulnerabilities, such as stagnant populations and pre-agricultural technology.
- **Gram Sabha (Under FRA):** The village assembly consisting of all adult residents of a habitation, statutory empowered under the FRA to initiate the process for determining the nature and extent of forest rights.



- **Transshipment Port:** A specialized maritime port facility where cargo or containers are transferred from a large vessel to smaller ones (or vice versa) during transit to their final destinations.
- **Circuit Bench:** A temporary or shifting court bench constituted by a High Court away from its main seat to hear cases in remote geographic regions, ensuring access to justice.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Fifth and Sixth Schedules:** Form the bedrock of tribal area administration. While the mainland follows the Fifth Schedule, Union Territories like Andaman and Nicobar Islands utilize special regulations under Article 240 promulgated by the President.
- **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006:** Specifically Section 3 and 4, which recognize individual and community forest rights over traditional lands, mandating Gram Sabha consent as a prerequisite for any developmental displacement.
- **Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956:** A statutory regulation designed to protect the interests and traditional lands of the aboriginal tribes of the Union Territory against external encroachment.

Additional Strategic Keypoints

- **Geopolitical Imperative:** GNI sits close to the Malacca Strait, making the dual-use military-civilian airport and port crucial for India's power projection and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Environmental Buffer Reductions:** The PIL challenges connected administrative actions, specifically the reduction of ecological buffer zones around Galathea National Park and Campbell Bay National Park to accommodate the project.
- **Historical Displacement Loop:** The plea emphasizes that a 1972 settlement of ex-servicemen on the island's east coast had previously disturbed Shompen habitations, forcing them into the deeper interior forests now targeted by the current project.

Conclusion

The judicial dispute surrounding the Great Nicobar megaproject highlights the classic friction between national security priorities and statutory tribal protection. While the transshipment port and military facilities are geopolitically indispensable for India's maritime footprint, bypassing the rigorous consent and settlement mechanisms of the Forest Rights Act risks marginalizing indigenous groups like the Shompen. True sustainable development requires an inclusive model where strategic infrastructure execution coexists with absolute transparency, ecological compliance, and uncompromised respect for tribal self-determination.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Polity):** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections; statutory bodies and acts like the FRA; judicial review of mega administrative projects; tribal governance models.
- **GS Paper III (Environment & Strategic Security):** Conservation, environmental impact assessment (EIA); infrastructure development (Ports, Airports); linkages between internal security, border infrastructure, and local indigenous populations.
- **Key Themes:** Sustainable Development vs. Strategic Growth, Rights of PVTGs, Coastal Zone Regulations, and Maritime Geopolitics in the Indian Ocean Region.