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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. Delhi Police Suggest Larger SC Bench to Review UAPA Bail Curbs

The Delhi Police, through the Additional Solicitor-General, has requested the Supreme Court to refer the issue of bail under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) to a larger Bench. This comes in light of perceived conflicts between coordinate Benches regarding whether prolonged incarceration and trial delays can override the strict statutory bail restrictions under anti-terror laws.

Key Summary Points

- **Demand for Larger Bench:** The Delhi Police has urged the Supreme Court to form a larger Bench to resolve conflicting judgments on whether long-term imprisonment without trial can override UAPA's strict bail bars.
- **The "Bail is the Rule" Conflict:** The submission directly reacts to a Supreme Court ruling (Justices B.V. Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan) which reaffirmed that "bail is the rule and jail is an exception" even under special anti-terror statutes like the UAPA.
- **Dilution of Presumption of Innocence:** The State argues that Section 43D(5) of the UAPA creates a mandatory statutory presumption against bail, meaning the standard judicial presumption of innocence must legally take a "back seat."
- **Incarceration vs. Statutory Bar:** The core legal debate centers on balancing a citizen's fundamental right to a speedy trial (under Article 21) against the explicit statutory prohibitions on bail enacted by Parliament for national security.
- **Context of the Plea:** This legal challenge arose during the bail hearings of 2020 Delhi riots accused Abdul Khalid Saifi and Tasleem Ahmad, who are appealing a High Court order that denied them relief.

Key Definitions

- **Coordinate Bench:** A Bench of the same strength (number of judges) as another. A judgment by a coordinate bench is binding on another bench of equal strength; if they disagree, the matter must be referred to a larger Bench.
- **Statutory Bail Bar:** A legal restriction explicitly written into an Act of Parliament that limits or modifies the standard judicial discretion to grant bail to an accused.
- **Presumption of Innocence:** A legal principle stating that every person accused of any crime is considered innocent until proven guilty. Under certain special laws, this burden of proof shifts.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Section 43D(5) of the UAPA, 1967:** This clause prohibits a court from granting bail if, on a perusal of the case diary or the report made under Section 173 of the CrPC/BNSS, there are reasonable grounds for believing that the accusation against such person is prima facie true.
- **Article 21 of the Constitution:** Guarantees the Right to Life and Personal Liberty. The Supreme Court has repeatedly read the "right to a speedy trial" and protection against "prolonged pre-trial detention" into this Article.





- **Article 145(3) of the Constitution:** Deals with the requirement of a minimum of five judges (Constitution Bench) for cases involving a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of the Constitution.

Additional Key Insights and Judicial Precedents

- **K.A. Najeeb Case (2021):** The Supreme Court previously held that despite the stringent provisions of Section 43D(5), constitutional courts can still grant bail if an accused has undergone a significant period of incarceration and the trial is unlikely to conclude anytime soon, as statutory bars cannot override Article 21.
- **Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali Case (2019):** A stricter interpretation where the SC ruled that courts must not deeply analyze evidence at the stage of bail under UAPA, but only see if the prosecution's case is prima facie true, making bail exceptionally difficult to attain.

Conclusion

The debate highlights an ongoing institutional friction between national security legislation and constitutional guarantees of liberty. While statutory provisions like Section 43D(5) of the UAPA aim to prevent individuals accused of terror from disrupting public order, prolonged delays in trials trap individuals in jail indefinitely without conviction. A definitive ruling by a larger Bench is essential to establish a uniform legal standard that harmonizes state security priorities with the fundamental right to liberty.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance and Constitution):** Criminal Justice Reforms, Balancing Fundamental Rights (Article 21) with National Security, Judicial Precedents, and the functioning of the Judiciary.
- **GS Paper III (Internal Security):** Anti-terror legislation (UAPA), its efficacy, challenges in implementation, and legal loopholes.
- **Prelims Value:** Provisions of UAPA, Section 43D(5), Article 21 interpretations, and the mechanism of referring cases to larger judicial Benches.

2. Democracy and Rule of Law Anchor India-Nordic Natural Partnership

During the Third India-Nordic Summit held in Oslo, Norway, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the leaders of the five Nordic countries reaffirmed their commitment to democracy, the rule of law, and multilateralism. Describing each other as natural partners, the nations agreed to elevate their relationship to a new strategic level, focusing heavily on technology, sustainability, and economic integration.

Key Summary Points

- **Upgrade to Strategic Partnership:** India and the five Nordic nations formally upgraded their bilateral ties to a 'Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership' to jointly develop sustainable global solutions.
- **Core Shared Values:** The partnership is structurally anchored on a mutual commitment to democracy, a rules-based international order, the rule of law, and robust multilateralism amid rising global geopolitical uncertainties.





- **Targeted Sectoral Synergies:** The alliance combines specific regional expertise, such as Iceland's geothermal energy, Norway's blue economy, Sweden's advanced manufacturing, Finland's digital telecom, and Denmark's cybersecurity, with India's massive talent pool and market scale.
- **Economic and Trade Impetus:** The summit prioritized utilizing the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and the landmark India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA)—which envisages a \$100 billion investment into India—to quadruple bilateral trade over the next decade.
- **Strategic Arctic Cooperation:** Recognizing the ecological impact of climate change, the leaders resolved to deepen joint polar research, environmental monitoring, and sustainable maritime practices in the Arctic region.

Key Definitions

- **Nordic Countries:** A geographical and cultural region in Northern Europe consisting of five sovereign states: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden.
- **Blue Economy:** The sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs while preserving the health of the ocean ecosystem.
- **EFTA (European Free Trade Association):** An intergovernmental organization of four nations (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland) operating parallel to the EU for the promotion of free trade.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution (DPSPs):** Directs the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honourable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **India-EFTA TEPA Legal Framework:** A legally binding trade pact signed between India and EFTA nations that mandates phased tariff reductions, intellectual property protection, and investment commitments totaling \$100 billion.
- **UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea):** The international legal framework governing maritime activities, which forms the basis for the safe, open, and sustainable blue economy cooperation discussed at the summit.

Additional Key Insights and Judicial Precedents

- **The Rule of Law Doctrine:** Originating from A.V. Dicey, the "Rule of Law" implies that no individual is above the law. In the context of international relations, India and Nordic nations utilize this doctrine to advocate for a "rules-based international order" opposing arbitrary unilateral aggression.
- **Strategic Autonomy and Multilateralism:** The summit reflects India's proactive multi-alignment strategy, building strong mini-lateral partnerships with technologically advanced Western blocks without compromising its independent foreign policy.
- **Defense Industrial Collaboration:** India opened doors for 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in its Defence Industrial Corridors, actively inviting advanced Swedish and Nordic defense manufacturing firms.



Conclusion

The Third India-Nordic Summit marks a transition from purely diplomatic interactions to an actionable economic and ecological alliance. By anchoring technological convergence to shared democratic values, India and the Nordic countries have established a model for north-south cooperation. This partnership not only accelerates India's green transition and digital revolution but also enhances its strategic footprint in Arctic geopolitics.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India and affecting India's interests; Effect of policies of developed countries on India's foreign policy.
- **GS Paper III (Environment & Economy):** Renewable energy infrastructure, climate change mitigation, Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), and scientific cooperation in polar research.
- **Prelims Value:** Mapping of Nordic and EFTA countries, features of India-EFTA TEPA, Mission LiFE, and global circular economy initiatives.

3. US Clears Apache, Howitzer Support Services for India

The United States Department of State has approved two major potential foreign military sales to India for long-term sustainment support and related equipment for AH-64E Apache helicopters and M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers. The dual deals, collectively valued at over \$428 million, underscore the deepening interoperability and strategic alignment between the two nations in the Indo-Pacific region.

Key Summary Points

- **Strategic Military Support Package:** The US has approved support services and technical logistics worth \$198.2 million for India's Apache attack helicopters and \$230 million for its M777A2 Ultra-Light Howitzers.
- **Enhancing Defensive Capabilities:** According to the US State Department, these sales aim to improve India's capacity to counter regional threats, strengthen its homeland defense, and maintain operational readiness without altering the basic military balance in South Asia.
- **Broader Defense Cooperation Context:** The approvals coincide with a high-level diplomatic visit by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio for a Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting, alongside ongoing parallel procurements like India's clearance for six P-8I maritime surveillance aircraft and five-year support for MH-60R helicopters.
- **Key Industrial Stakeholders:** The primary defense contractors executing these logistics and engineering sustainment contracts include global defense majors Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and BAE Systems.
- **Countering Regional Asymmetry:** The technical upkeep of M777 howitzers and Apache helicopters is directly vital for India's high-altitude border defense and tactical deterrence along its disputed northern and western land borders.





Key Definitions

- **Sustainment Support:** Continuous engineering, logistics, spare parts supply, repair services, and technical training required to keep advanced military platforms operational throughout their life cycle.
- **Ultra-Light Howitzer (ULH):** A lightweight, highly mobile artillery piece (such as the M777) constructed primarily from titanium alloys, designed to be easily airlifted by helicopters to remote, high-altitude mountainous terrains.
- **Major Defense Partner (MDP):** A unique designation granted to India by the US Congress in 2016, which elevates defense trade and technology sharing to a level commensurate with America's closest allies.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 73 of the Indian Constitution:** Extends the executive power of the Union to matters with respect to which Parliament has power to make laws, including entering into international defense treaties and procurement agreements.
- **US Arms Export Control Act (AECA):** The legal framework governing US foreign military sales (FMS). Under this act, the US State Department must approve and notify Congress of major defense sales to foreign partners.
- **Foundational Defense Agreements (BECA, COMCASA, LEMOA):** The structural legal architecture between India and the US that facilitates high-level encrypted communications, geospatial intelligence sharing, and reciprocal logistics support.

Additional Key Insights and Bilateral Milestones

- **Strategic Autonomy and Trade Friction:** The approval signifies that India-US defense relations have built institutional resilience, successfully insulating military supply chains from parallel diplomatic frictions over trade tariffs or unilateral sanctions.
- **The Quad Synergy:** The convergence of military procurement and the upcoming Quad meeting emphasizes the shared objective of India, the US, Japan, and Australia to maintain a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" to balance assertive regional actors.
- **2013 & 2015 Frameworks:** The current momentum is rooted in the long-term commitments established under the September 2013 Joint US-India Declaration on Defence Cooperation and the 2015 Framework for the US-India Defence Relationship.

Conclusion

The US clearance for Apache and Howitzer support services marks an evolution in India-US defense ties from a buyer-seller relationship to a robust, long-term sustainability partnership. By ensuring the operational readiness of India's frontline combat platforms, the agreement acts as a significant force multiplier for India's border defense. This collaboration illustrates how shared geopolitical priorities in the Indo-Pacific can drive deep technical and military integration despite tactical differences in trade policies.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral groupings and agreements involving India and affecting India's interests; US foreign policy implications on Indian sovereignty and strategic autonomy; Quad dynamics.



- **GS Paper III (Security):** Defense procurement procedures, modernization of armed forces, indigenization of technology, and management of border security challenges.
- **Prelims Value:** Features of Apache AH-64E, M777 Howitzers, P-8I Poseidon, the status of Major Defense Partner, and the foundational agreements (LEMOA, COMCASA, BECA).

4. Focus on Defence Ties, Maritime Security: Rajnath Meets Vietnamese Counterpart

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh held a high-level meeting with his Vietnamese counterpart, General Phan Văn Giang, in Hanoi to comprehensively review and expand the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between India and Vietnam. The bilateral discussions focused heavily on enhancing maritime security, deepening defense industrial collaboration, capacity building, and maintaining regional stability across the Indo-Pacific region.

Key Summary Points

- **Strategic Maritime Focus:** Both nations emphasized the critical importance of ensuring peace, security, safety, and freedom of navigation and overflight in the Indo-Pacific region, directly touching upon shared concerns in the South China Sea.
- **Expanding Operational Interoperability:** India and Vietnam agreed to upgrade institutional cooperation by expanding military training programs, high-level defense policy dialogues, reciprocal ship visits, cyber security cooperation, and joint military exercises.
- **Defense Industrial & Capability Gifting:** The engagement builds upon India's past strategic transfers, including the delivery of 12 high-speed guard boats, the gifting of two simulators alongside a monetary grant for a language and IT laboratory at Nha Trang, and the landmark July 2023 gifting of the active missile corvette INS Kirpan.
- **Logistics and Future Vision Framework:** The meeting reviewed milestones under the 'Joint Vision Statement on India-Vietnam Defence Partnership Towards 2030' and the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on mutual logistics support, which simplifies cross-service refueling and technical docking.
- **Countering Regional Hegemony:** The strengthening of ties is highly significant given China's assertive maritime claims and territorial disputes in the South China Sea, driving Vietnam's keen interest in acquiring advanced Indian military hardware like the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile.

Key Definitions

- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership:** The highest tier of diplomatic and strategic engagement that Vietnam accords to foreign nations, implying deep trust, multi-sectoral integration, and high-level defense convergence.
- **Missile Corvette:** A small, fast, and highly maneuverable warship armed with anti-ship and anti-air missiles, typically utilized for coastal defense and surface warfare operations.
- **Freedom of Navigation:** A principle of international law stating that ships flying the flag of any sovereign state shall not suffer interference from other states, apart from exceptions provided for in international law.





Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Enjoins the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law.
- **UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea), 1982:** The core international legal framework governing maritime boundaries, exclusive economic zones, and navigation rights, which both India and Vietnam vigorously advocate for against unilateral territorial revisionism.
- **Defense Acquisition Procedure (DAP):** The legal and regulatory framework governing India's defense exports and international industrial tie-ups, enabling streamlined lines of credit and military hardware transfers to friendly foreign nations.

Additional Key Insights and Geopolitical Significance

- **Act East Policy Anchor:** Vietnam serves as a central pillar of India's Act East Policy and is a crucial partner in India's Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), which seeks an open and inclusive security architecture.
- **Defense Credit Lines:** India has previously extended defense Lines of Credit (LoC) totaling \$600 million to Vietnam, signaling a major paradigm shift for New Delhi from being a net importer of defense equipment to a strategic exporter and security provider.
- **Strategic Chokepoints:** Enhanced naval cooperation between the Indian Navy and the Vietnam People's Navy secures critical sea lines of communication (SLOCs) flowing through the Malacca Strait into the broader Pacific.

Conclusion

The high-level defense meeting between India and Vietnam underscores a transitioning strategic alignment aimed at preserving a rules-based order in Asia. By moving beyond symbolic diplomacy into concrete material transfers—such as missile corvettes, defense lines of credit, and mutual logistics agreements—India has demonstrated its resolve to act as a reliable security partner. This partnership is vital to establishing a stable balance of power in the Indo-Pacific, ensuring that unilateral maritime assertions do not jeopardize collective economic and regional sovereignty.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India; Effect of policies of developing and developed countries on India's strategic interests; India's Act East Policy and ASEAN relations.
- **GS Paper III (Security):** Maritime security challenges, indigenization and export of defense technology (BrahMos, INS Kirpan), and security dynamics in the South China Sea.
- **Prelims Value:** Location of Hanoi, Nha Trang, and geographic features of the South China Sea; details of INS Kirpan; features of the 'Joint Vision Statement 2030'; and UNCLOS mandates.

5. TVK Govt. Committed to Two-Language Policy in T.N.

The Tamil Nadu School Education Minister has firmly stated that the state government will remain steadfast in its adherence to the existing two-language policy (Tamil and English), rejecting any transition to a three-language formula. This development emerges amidst persistent friction with the Central Government regarding the implementation of the PM SHRI school scheme and judicial directives concerning Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas, alongside significant milestones in regional heritage recovery.



Key Summary Points

- **Stance on Language Policy:** The Tamil Nadu government has reaffirmed its categorical opposition to the National Education Policy's (NEP) proposed three-language formula, declaring that it will not compromise on its historical two-language framework.
- **PM SHRI Scheme Friction:** The state's declaration serves as a direct legislative pushback following a recent reminder from the Union Ministry of Education urging Tamil Nadu to implement the Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM SHRI) scheme.
- **Navodaya Vidyalayas Dispute:** In response to a Supreme Court directive ordering the state to allocate land for Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas (JNVs), the state education ministry indicated that the sensitive matter is under active departmental deliberation.
- **Public-Private Partnerships in Education:** Acknowledging an operational imbalance where government schools outnumber private institutions but suffer from lower student enrollment, the state plans to plug infrastructural deficits using public-private partnerships (PPP).
- **Repatriation of Chola Antiquities:** The state's archaeological wing announced plans to permanently house the historic Chola-era Anaimangalam copper plates in Thanjavur, following their formal repatriation to India from Leiden University in the Netherlands.



Key Definitions

- **Two-Language Policy:** A language education model adopted historically by Tamil Nadu (codified via a 1968 State Assembly Resolution) that mandates the teaching of only the regional language (Tamil) and the official link language (English), consciously excluding Hindi.
- **PM SHRI Scheme:** A centrally sponsored scheme aimed at upgrading existing government schools into exemplar institutions showcasing the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- **Anaimangalam Copper Plates:** Significant 11th-century Chola charter epigraphs issued by King Rajaraja Chola I and his son Rajendra Chola I, recording the grant of the village Anaimangalam to a Buddhist monastery in Nagapattinam.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 343 & Article 351:** Article 343 establishes Hindi in Devanagari script as the official language of the Union, while Article 351 contains a directive development provision for spreading the Hindi language, a point of federal friction for non-Hindi speaking states.
- **Seventh Schedule (Concurrent List - Entry 25):** Education, including technical education, medical education, and universities, falls under the Concurrent List via the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1976, giving both the Union and States legislative powers but generating federal overlaps.
- **Antiquities and Art Treasures Act, 1972:** The primary legal framework governing the regulation of export trade in antiquities and art treasures, which guides institutional mechanisms for the domestic preservation and movement of repatriated historical artifacts.



Additional Key Insights and Cultural Context

- **The JNV Impasse:** Central government-run Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas traditionally implement a three-language formula. Tamil Nadu remains the only Indian state without JNVs due to the long-standing political consensus against the mandatory introduction of Hindi.
- **Keeladi Excavation Reports:** The state government is pressing the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to formally publish the exhaustive excavation reports from the initial phases of the Keeladi site, which has provided crucial scientific evidence pushing the antiquity of the Sangam era further back.
- **Incentivizing Government Enrolment:** The focus on shifting to a PPP model highlights a structural crisis in state schooling, where free educational infrastructure struggles to compete with private enterprise due to perceived English-medium instructional deficits.

Conclusion

The linguistic and cultural assertions of Tamil Nadu illustrate the delicate dynamics of Indian asymmetric federalism. While the Central Government utilizes developmental schemes like PM SHRI to build a standardized, nationwide educational architecture under the NEP, state administrations often view these mechanisms as an infringement upon regional autonomy and language rights. True educational progress will rely on a cooperative federal framework that respects deep-seated cultural choices while modernizing infrastructure to bridge the enrollment gap.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity and Governance):** Issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers, the role of language in federal friction, and Government policies for development in the Education sector.
- **GS Paper I (Indian Culture):** Salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature, and Architecture from ancient to medieval times; Chola administration, epigraphy, and the historical significance of the Sangam/Keeladi excavations.
- **Prelims Value:** Features of the PM SHRI scheme, constitutional articles related to language (Articles 343-351), Chola dynasty lineage (Rajaraja I), and the geographic distribution of archaeological sites like Keeladi.

6. Sixth Tiger Dies of Suspected CDV in M.P.'s Kanha Reserve

A six-year-old male tiger has been found dead in the Mukki range of Madhya Pradesh's Kanha Tiger Reserve (KTR), marking the sixth feline mortality within a single month suspected to be caused by the Canine Distemper Virus (CDV). The outbreak, which previously claimed a tigress and her four cubs in the Sarhi range, points toward a critical biosecurity and disease spillover challenge at the forest–village interface.

Key Summary Points

- **Spike in Fatalities:** The death of an adult male tiger in the Mukki range has taken the big cat mortality toll within Kanha Tiger Reserve to six inside a month, indicating a potential transmission wave across different forest ranges.
- **Canine Distemper Suspected:** Initial post-mortem examinations revealed acute lung infections and respiratory distress, a clinical hallmark of the highly contagious Canine Distemper Virus (CDV), which has been confirmed in the previous five deaths.



- **Domestic-to-Wild Spillover:** Wildlife authorities attribute the virus transmission to the expanding population of free-ranging feral and stray domestic dogs that infiltrate the reserve's core and buffer areas from adjoining villages.
- **Containment and Disinfection:** KTR management has launched emergency containment measures, including cordoning off and chemically disinfecting local water bodies with bleach and lime, burning animal scat, and implementing an extensive ring-vaccination drive for dogs in 90 fringe villages.
- **Broader Ecological Crisis:** The outbreak highlights a shifting pattern in wildlife mortality where habitat fragmentation and rising human-wildlife interfaces make protected apex predators highly vulnerable to domestic pathogen spillovers rather than just traditional poaching threats.

Key Definitions

- **Canine Distemper Virus (CDV):** A highly contagious, single-stranded RNA virus belonging to the *Paramyxoviridae* family that attacks the respiratory, gastrointestinal, and central nervous systems of a wide range of carnivores, including domestic dogs, jackals, leopards, and tigers.
- **Forest–Village Interface:** The transitional geographical zone where human settlements and agricultural lands directly border protected forest ecosystems, facilitating close contact between domestic livestock/pets and wild fauna.
- **Ring Vaccination:** A targeted epidemiological strategy where all susceptible domestic vectors (dogs) within a specific radius surrounding an infected wildlife zone are vaccinated to create a biological barrier or "immune firewall" to halt viral transmission.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A of the Constitution (DPSPs):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duties):** Enjoins a duty upon every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (Schedule I):** The Bengal Tiger (*Panthera tigris*) is protected under Schedule I, granting it the highest level of legal protection against hunting, trade, and anthropogenic interference, with mandatory statutory inquiries into every mortality.

Additional Key Insights and Conservation Challenges

- **The Vulnerability of Territorial Spillover:** Due to high tiger densities and crowded core habitats in Madhya Pradesh (the "Tiger State"), weaker or younger tigers are often pushed into buffer zones or agricultural fringes. This spatial displacement drastically increases their contact with domestic waste, feral dog packs, and contaminated prey carcasses.
- **Past Global Precedents:** CDV has historically caused catastrophic declines in wild carnivores, famously wiping out nearly 30% of the lion population in Africa's Serengeti National Park during the 1990s, proving its capacity to decimate localized big cat populations if unchecked.



- **One Health Approach Deficit:** The crisis underscores the urgent need to integrate the "One Health" framework—which links human health, domestic animal health, and wildlife health—into standard operating procedures for Tiger Reserve management.

Conclusion

The consecutive tiger mortalities in Kanha Tiger Reserve underscore that wildlife conservation can no longer succeed by merely guarding forest boundaries against poachers. Feral dog populations acting as active reservoirs for lethal pathogens like CDV present an invisible, asymmetric biosecurity threat to endangered species. Mitigating this risk demands institutionalizing rigorous, permanent immunization buffers around protected areas and managing the domestic-wildlife interface through active community veterinary programs.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Environment & Biodiversity):** Wildlife conservation, threat of zoonotic and spillover diseases to endangered species, management of Tiger Reserves, and the functioning of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).
- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Government interventions for environmental safety, inter-departmental coordination (Forest vs. Animal Husbandry), and the implementation of environmental policies.
- **Prelims Value:** Geographical features and location of Kanha Tiger Reserve (Mukki, Sarhi ranges), characteristics of Canine Distemper Virus (vectors, affected systems), standard NTCA protocols for carcass disposal, and the "One Health" concept.

7. Global Order and India-China Relations Post Trump-Xi Beijing Summit

The high-profile state visit of US President Donald Trump to Beijing for a superpower summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping has signaled a structural shift from active strategic competition to an era of managed accommodation. Termed a new vision for "constructive strategic stability," the summit carries vast geopolitical weight for global economic certainty, technology supply chains, and the strategic positioning of India within the Indo-Pacific.

Key Summary Points

- **A Vision of Strategic Stability:** The US and China formally agreed to move away from aggressive decoupling toward a framework of "constructive strategic stability," providing a predictable bilateral roadmap for the coming years.
- **Institutional Trade Architecture:** To inject market certainty, the superpowers chartered two new government-to-government institutions—the US-China Board of Trade and the US-China Board of Investment—handling non-sensitive trade, agricultural access, and mutual tariff adjustments.
- **Tech Interdependence and AI Governance:** High-level tech participation at the summit underscored that complete supply chain decoupling remains unviable, prompting initial dialogue on coordinating artificial intelligence (AI) safety as a shared global responsibility.
- **Pragmatic Shift on the Taiwan Red Line:** President Xi reiterated that the Taiwan question is an absolute red line; in response, the US side signaled deep prudence against backing unilateral cross-strait independence, viewing status-quo peace as an economic and military necessity.





- **Implications for India's Strategic Autonomy:** While a US-China rapprochement triggers regional concerns of a compressed diplomatic footprint for New Delhi, analytical perspectives suggest India's growth remains anchored in its independent strategic autonomy and active multi-alignment.

Key Definitions

- **Constructive Strategic Stability:** A diplomatic framework wherein competing superpowers prioritize conflict avoidance, economic truces, and predictable rules of engagement without fully resolving systemic ideological rivalries.
- **G2 Arrangement:** A geopolitical concept implying a bipolar world order where the two largest global economies (the US and China) informally manage global affairs and carve out spheres of influence.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** A foreign policy state where a nation maintains its independence to make sovereign choices based on national interest, without being structurally bound by or subservient to any single foreign power or military alliance.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Mandates that India shall strive to promote international peace, maintain honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law, guiding New Delhi's response to changing superpower dynamics.
- **US-India Major Defense Partner Status:** A distinct statutory designation granted to India by the US Congress that legally insulates and prioritizes defense tech transfers to India, irrespective of shifting US-China commercial ties.
- **The Shanghai Communiqué (1972) Framework:** The foundational legal and diplomatic document under which the US recognized the "One China" position, historically mirroring the delicate legal maneuvering observed during the current Taiwan discussions.

Additional Key Insights and Geopolitical Friction Points

- **The Quad Balancing Act:** A potential US-China reset tests the institutional cohesion of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (comprising India, the US, Japan, and Australia). India must carefully ensure that any tactical US accommodation of Beijing does not dilute maritime security commitments in the Indian Ocean.
- **The "Ballast Stone" of Corporate Interests:** The presence of top American tech and financial executives in Beijing demonstrates that transnational market integration and manufacturing dependencies continue to act as a powerful counterweight to political hawks in Washington.
- **Multilateral Cooperation Anchors:** As superpower dynamics shift, India can maximize its leverage via non-Western and global-south mini-lateral platforms such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to preserve regional balance.

Conclusion

The Trump-Xi summit in Beijing marks a transition from volatile confrontation to calculated near-peer accommodation. While the creation of bilateral boards of trade and common understandings on flashpoints like Taiwan provide temporary breathing room for the global market, they also alter the calculations of regional powers. For India, the development emphasizes that reliance on external geopolitical rivalries is secondary to building comprehensive national power and sustaining strategic autonomy through diversified partnerships.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India and affecting India's interests; Policy changes of developed nations and their direct impact on India's foreign policy and sovereignty.
- **GS Paper III (Economy & Technology):** Global supply chain resilience, global governance of artificial intelligence, and the impact of macro-economic alignments on developing markets.
- **Prelims Value:** Understanding the structure of the Quad, geographic mapping of East Asia and the Taiwan Strait, global AI governance frameworks, and core principles of India's non-aligned/multi-aligned foreign policy doctrine.

8. Lunar Regolith Secrets Revealed by Chandrayaan-3 Hop Experiment

New scientific findings published in the Astrophysical Journal by scientists from the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad, have revealed that the Moon's upper surface is not uniform. Data collected by the Chandra's Surface Thermophysical Experiment (ChaSTE) payload during Chandrayaan-3's historic "hop" maneuver on September 4, 2023, has shown that the lunar regolith has two distinct physical and thermal layers within just a few centimeters of depth.

Key Summary Points

- **The Hop Experiment Phenomenon:** Before entering hibernation for the lunar night, the Chandrayaan-3 lander fired its engines, lifted itself 40cm, and drifted 50cm away to perform a surprise "hop" maneuver that intentionally disturbed the upper lunar soil layer.
- **Discovery of Distinct Stratification:** Analysis of the newly exposed soil layers indicates that the loose, porous regolith at the very top quickly transitions to a significantly denser, compact layer just 2 to 6cm underneath.
- **Thermal Disparity at Twilight:** A first-of-its-kind thermal profile deployed for 57 minutes during the lunar twilight revealed that at depths of just 10cm, the temperature dropped drastically by about 60°C compared to the surface.
- **Extreme Thermal Non-Conductivity:** The data highlights the extreme insulation capacity of the lunar soil, proving that the top few centimeters act as a powerful barrier against solar radiation and extreme external space temperatures.
- **Strategic Value for Future Mining:** Understanding the compaction and density variation within centimeters is critical for planning future robotic excavation, lunar resource mining, and sample return missions.

Key Definitions

- **Lunar Regolith:** A loose, fragmented layer of dust, soil, and broken rock fragments covering the solid bedrock of the Moon, created by continuous meteoric impacts.
- **Hop Maneuver:** A technology demonstration where a spacecraft, after a soft-landing, restarts its thrusters to lift off from the lunar surface and touch down at a nearby spot, proving retro-firing capabilities for future return missions.
- **ChaSTE (Chandra's Surface Thermophysical Experiment):** A scientific instrument equipped with a thermal probe and 10 high-precision sensors designed to measure the thermal conductivity and temperature profile of the lunar polar surficial soil.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51A(h) of the Indian Constitution:** Specifies that it shall be the fundamental duty of every citizen of India to develop the scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform.
- **The Outer Space Treaty, 1967:** An international legal framework ratified by India that treats outer space, including the Moon, as the "province of all mankind," prohibiting sovereign territorial claims while permitting scientific exploration.
- **Indian Space Policy, 2023:** The domestic regulatory framework that encourages institutional research by bodies like PRL and enables strategic space technological self-reliance.



Additional Key Insights and Space Exploration Dynamics

- **Designing Human Habitats:** The sharp 60°C temperature drop at a mere 10cm depth offers vital data for engineering underground or semi-underground lunar bases, where astronauts can use the natural regolith insulation to survive volatile thermal swings.
- **Validation of Water-Ice Distribution:** Previous findings from the same ChaSTE instrument group confirmed that subsurface water-ice could be highly prevalent outside the immediate permanently shadowed regions (PSRs), which changes the mapping paradigms of lunar resources.
- **Rocket Plume Interaction:** The experiment provided practical, real-world data on how engine exhaust gases erode and displace fine lunar dust, which is necessary to prevent dust contamination from blinding optical instruments during future multi-spacecraft landings.

Conclusion

The insights derived from Chandrayaan-3's impromptu hop experiment transition our understanding of the lunar surface from broad orbital observations to precise microscopic engineering data. By mapping the thermal gradients and density shifts occurring within mere centimeters, Indian scientists have provided the global space community with foundational parameters necessary for structural design on the Moon. This success shifts India's status from a nation demonstrating landing capabilities to a core contributor of primary lunar science.

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UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Science and Technology):** Awareness in the fields of Space, indigenization of technology, achievements of Indian scientists in space exploration, and components of the Chandrayaan-3 mission.
- **GS Paper I (Geography):** Astronomy, planetary features, and physical characteristics of the lunar surface.
- **Prelims Value:** Functions of the ChaSTE payload, institutional profile of the Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), mechanics of the lunar regolith, and the significance of the South Pole landing site.



9. Re-evaluating Strategic Autonomy: The Quad and Shifting Great Power Dynamics

The geopolitical landscape is undergoing profound structural shifts, characterized by a complex dynamic of US-China stabilization on one hand and a deepening Russia-China axis on the other. For India, these dual "pilgrimages to Beijing" by global leaders challenge traditional concepts of "strategic autonomy." Experts argue that instead of being rattled by every shift in great-power relations, India must accelerate its own comprehensive national modernization and leverage its partnerships within the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) to manage regional power imbalances.

Key Summary Points

- **The Reality of Superpower Détente:** The transition of US-China relations from open confrontation to managed stabilization (a potential Sino-American G2 framework) underscores that superpower alignments fluctuate based on pragmatism, rendering over-reliance on cold war binaries obsolete.
- **The Russia-China Axis Challenge:** China's expanding economic, technological, and military footprint, combined with Russia's growing strategic and economic dependence on Beijing post-the Ukraine crisis, presents India with its primary external challenge in both continental and maritime spheres.
- **Limitations of Traditional Autonomy:** The historical concept of "strategic autonomy"—often interpreted in domestic political discourse as maintaining equal distance from the West and the East—is facing systemic stress as an assertive China directly pressures India's northern boundaries.
- **The Western Pivot for Modernization:** To counter a widening structural gap where China's economy has grown five times larger than India's, New Delhi is actively utilizing the West for technology transfers, high-value capital injection, R&D cooperation, and critical defense logistics.
- **Re-energizing the Quad Architecture:** Despite cyclical skepticism regarding US reliability under changing administrations, the upcoming Quad Foreign Ministers' meeting remains a vital, institutionalized mechanism to build a multipolar Asia and counter regional hegemony.



Key Definitions

- **Strategic Autonomy:** A foreign policy doctrine where a nation seeks to maintain independence of choice and action in its external relations, free from binding military alliances or structural subservience to foreign powers.
- **G-2 (Group of Two):** A conceptual geopolitical arrangement where the world's two preeminent superpowers (the United States and China) informally collaborate to manage global economic and security issues, establishing exclusive spheres of influence.
- **Power Imbalance:** A structural disparity in comprehensive national power (economic, technological, and military capabilities) between neighboring states, which can potentially undermine deterrence and stability if left unaddressed.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Dictates that the State shall endeavor to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for treaty obligations, providing the philosophical bedrock for India's foreign policy.
- **The Quad Joint Statements / Declarations:** Though not a formal military treaty, the Quad operates under politically binding executive frameworks and joint declarations aimed at securing a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific based on international law.
- **Foundational Defense Agreements (LEMOA, COMCASA, BECA):** The triad of legal and logistics pacts signed between India and the US that functionally bind their military communication networks and geospatial intelligence sharing, providing operational teeth to India's Western pivot.

Additional Key Insights and Tactical Reorientations

- **Economic Realism vs. Mindspace:** While Russia and China dominate India's security and political debates, economic data highlights a sharp reality: India's trade and commercial integration with Western blocks and small European markets like the Netherlands frequently surpasses its trade with traditional continental partners, indicating where real economic leverage lies.
- **The Inevitability of Asymmetry:** India cannot close the comprehensive power gap with China in the immediate future. Consequently, external balancing through robust security networks like the Quad is not a luxury or a sign of weakness, but a necessary strategy for internal self-strengthening and defense modernization.
- **Institutional Multi-Alignment:** India's foreign policy has transitioned from historic non-alignment to a pragmatic multi-alignment strategy, allowing New Delhi to hold deep ties with Western partnerships like the Quad while simultaneously engaging in continental balancing acts through platforms like BRICS and the SCO.

Conclusion

The evolving great power dynamics demonstrate that global alliances are fluid, driven strictly by national interest rather than ideological loyalty. For India, a pragmatic reassessment of "strategic autonomy" is vital. True autonomy does not mean staying isolated from Western frameworks out of historical suspicion; rather, it lies in the capacity to aggressively leverage partnerships like the Quad to secure technological, economic, and military modernization. By building its internal strength through external cooperation, India can successfully navigate superpower shifts and ensure a stable, multipolar Asian order.

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 of developed and developing countries on India's strategic autonomy and foreign policy choices.
- **GS Paper III (Security):** Security challenges along borders, modernization of armed forces, and maritime security strategies in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) via the Quad.
- **Prelims Value:** Origin and structure of the Quad, location and member nations, meaning of terms like G2 and strategic autonomy, and the status of India's foundational defense agreements with Western partners.



10. Geographically Separated Asiatic Lion Population Under Consideration

In an interview ahead of the landmark International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) Summit, Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav confirmed that the central government is actively consulting states to establish a separate, geographically isolated free-ranging population of Asiatic Lions. The initiative aims to safeguard the species—currently confined to a single sub-population in Gujarat's Greater Gir landscape—against catastrophic events like genetic bottlenecking or epidemic outbreaks like Canine Distemper Virus (CDV).

Key Summary Points

- **Consultations for Translocation:** The Union Government has revived active institutional consultations with state governments to establish an alternative, geographically separated free-ranging habitat for Asiatic lions, addressing a long-delayed conservation mandate.
- **Mitigating Single-Population Risk:** Currently, the world's entire wild Asiatic lion population is localized in Gujarat's Greater Gir landscape, making the species highly vulnerable to total extinction from single catastrophic events such as contagious zoonotic outbreaks or cyclones.
- **Status of Population Expansion:** Proactive conservation models have successfully raised the lion population in Greater Gir to an estimated 891 individuals, prompting natural dispersal into alternative regional pockets like the Barda Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **Metapopulation Strategies for Cheetahs:** Regarding Project Cheetah, the government clarified that temporary enclosures are strictly for scientific acclimatization, with long-term plans focusing on a vast interstate Kuno-Gandhisagar-Ranthambore conservation complex spanning Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.
- **Coexistence-Based Management:** Rejecting top-down fortress conservation that forces forest communities out, the state framework heavily emphasizes integrating indigenous groups (like the Maldharis of Gir) to foster local, long-term human-wildlife coexistence.



Key Definitions

- **Asiatic Lion (*Panthera leo persica*):** A genetically distinct lion subspecies that once ranged across South-West Asia but is now restricted to a single isolated wild population in India's Gujarat state.
- **Translocation:** The deliberate capture, transport, and release of wild individuals or populations from one part of their natural range to another to establish a new, self-sustaining satellite population.
- **International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA):** A global coalition launched by India to conserve seven major big cat species—lion, tiger, leopard, snow leopard, cheetah, jaguar, and puma—through structured international scientific cooperation and resource sharing.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A of the Constitution:** Directs the State to protect and improve the natural environment, specifically mandating the safeguarding of the country's forests and diverse wildlife.



- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 (Schedule I):** Grants the Asiatic lion the absolute highest tier of statutory legal protection, prescribing stringent penalties against poaching and making central clearance mandatory for any handling or movement.
- **The landmark 2013 Supreme Court Order:** The apex court explicitly directed the translocation of a segment of Asiatic lions from Gir to Madhya Pradesh's Kuno National Park to mitigate extinction risks, a legal directive currently undergoing cooperative center-state resolution.

Additional Key Insights and Ecological Metrics

- **The Invisible Threat of CDV:** The urgency for a secondary home is driven by epidemiological lessons from Africa's Serengeti National Park, where Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) wiped out nearly one-third of the lion population in the 1990s, a scenario India wants to avoid given recent CDV shadows in domestic reserves.
- **Ecosystem-Centric vs. Tiger-Centric Focus:** The upcoming IBCA Summit in New Delhi emphasizes a shift from traditionally tiger-heavy allocations to an all-inclusive, ecosystem-centric model that treats apex big cats as umbrella species to rejuvenate distinct biomes like grasslands and open scrublands.
- **Interstate Cheetah Landscape Dynamics:** The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has mapped an extensive 11566 square kilometer continuous canopy corridor across Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, confirming that the natural straying of reintroduced cheetahs is an expected territorial behavior.

Conclusion

The central push to establish a secondary, geographically isolated home for the Asiatic lion marks a crucial transition from localized preservation to long-term macro-biosecurity. While Gujarat's intensive management has successfully revived the lion from near-extinction, keeping an entire endangered species confined to a single landscape violates fundamental laws of conservation biology. Overcoming federal and political frictions through science-based, consultative center-state dialogues is necessary to secure a resilient, multi-site future for India's apex carnivores.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Environment & Biodiversity):** Protected areas, project initiatives (Project Lion, Project Cheetah), functions of the IBCA, biodiversity preservation strategies, and the mitigation of zoonotic threats to endangered wildlife.
- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Centre-state relations regarding forest management, execution of judicial directions (SC 2013 order), and community-inclusive public policies.
- **Prelims Value:** Legal protection status of the Asiatic Lion (Schedule I, CITES Appendix I), geographical features of Gir, Barda, Kuno, and Gandhi Sagar sanctuaries, and the core conceptual pillars of the "Delhi Declaration" on big cats.

11. Why India Needs to Empower Local Bodies

The third tier of governance in India—comprising Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)—remains structurally and financially marginalized within the broader discourse on Indian federalism. Despite rapid urbanization and constitutional mandates, a persistent structural dependence on state governments for finances, personnel, and administration traps local bodies in a low-equilibrium political trap, severely constraining their delivery of public services and economic dynamism.



Key Summary Points

- **The Stepchild of Indian Federalism:** Debates on Indian federalism remain largely restricted to Centre-State relations, leaving the third tier structurally neglected in personnel, fiscal autonomy, and executive authority.
- **Severe Personnel Deficiencies:** Unlike the US or China, where nearly two-thirds of government employees work for local governments, just over 10% of India's total public sector workforce is stationed at the local government level, leading to systemic execution deficits.
- **Stagnant Local Resource Generation:** While central and state tax revenues have expanded significantly over the last six decades, tax collection by urban local bodies has stagnated at an abysmal 0.3% of GDP, driving an acute institutional reliance on state transfers.
- **Failure to Monetize Urban Land Values:** In contrast to China, which aggressively fiscalized rising urban land values through land sales and property taxes (reaching over 10% of GDP at its peak), India's local bodies have largely failed to mobilize revenue from urban property or land assets.
- **The State Control Loop:** State governments routinely exercise overbearing political and administrative control over ULBs, often bypassing local authority by directly appointing municipal commissioners and managing senior personnel transfers.

Key Definitions

- **Urban Local Bodies (ULBs):** Small, localized governance structures established in urban areas (such as Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils, and Nagar Panchayats) to manage civic administration and public service delivery.
- **Fiscal Autonomy:** The independent capacity of a sub-national or local government unit to raise its own tax and non-tax revenues, budget its resources, and execute expenditures without external institutional vetoes.
- **Competitive Sub-Federalism:** A dynamic where cities or districts within states compete directly against each other for capital investments, talent pools, and industrial innovation, acting as a structural catalyst for regional governance reforms.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1992:** Inserted Part IX and Part IXA into the Constitution, granting statutory recognition to rural (Panchayats) and urban (Municipalities) local bodies as the official third tier of democratic governance.
- **Article 243X and Article 243Y:** Detail the financial powers of municipalities, authorizing them to levy and collect specific taxes, duties, and tolls, alongside mandating State Finance Commissions (SFCs) to review and recommend resource devolution.
- **Twelfth Schedule of the Constitution:** Enumerates 18 distinct functional responsibilities—including urban planning, regulation of land-use, and public health infrastructure—that state governments are expected to devolve to Municipalities.

Additional Key Insights and Global Comparisons

- **The China-US Employment Contrast:** In both American and Chinese governance systems, decentralized execution means the bulk of civil servants interact at the local level. India's highly centralized alternative model vests disproportionate bureaucratic weight within Central and State secretariats, diluting grass-roots administrative capability.



- **Distortion of Urban Property Markets:** Legal legacies like the Urban Land Ceiling Act of 1976 historically fragmented urban land parcels, creating fertile grounds for rent-seeking, black money accumulation, and an unmonetized real estate ecosystem that leaves ULBs structurally impoverished.
- **The Path of Central Schemes:** To sidestep weak local capacities, the Central Government frequently channels urban transformation funds through top-down missions like AMRUT, JNNURM, and the Smart Cities Mission. While providing vital capital, these schemes run the risk of turning local bodies into mere implementing agents rather than autonomous governing units.

Conclusion

True transformation in Indian governance requires shifting the focus of federal debates from Centre-State squabbles to a deep structural empowerment of the third tier. Local bodies cannot function effectively as long as they are treated as administrative appendages of state governments, starved of staff, fiscal tools, and independent executive authority. Transitioning Indian cities into hubs of global innovation and manufacturing demands the devolution of genuine political autonomy, institutionalizing independent tax-generation tools, and empowering local leadership to govern dynamically.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity and Governance):** Devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein; Salient features of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments; Issues concerning structural federalism.
- **GS Paper III (Economic Development):** Urbanization challenges, municipal financing, mobilization of resources, infrastructure development, and land reform legacies.
- **Prelims Value:** Constitutional Articles under Part IXA (Articles 243P to 243ZG), mandates of State Finance Commissions, the composition of the 12th Schedule, and the structural metrics of urban renewal programs like AMRUT.

12. US Extends Sanctions Waiver for Russian Crude: Strategic Implications for India

The United States Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) has extended its temporary sanctions waiver for the purchase of sea-bound Russian crude oil by another month, shifting the expiration deadline to June 17. The strategic move aims to avert a massive supply shock in international energy markets following disruptions at major maritime chokepoints, directly impacting India's oil procurement economics and balancing Washington's domestic anti-inflation priorities.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNANCE

➤ Define and demarcate powers of bureaucrats such as corporation commissioners and elected representatives to eliminate collisions



➤ Facilitate seamless interaction between elected representatives and parastatals to make role of elected representatives meaningful

➤ Ensure adequate flow of funds to urban local bodies

➤ Arrange for frequent capacity building workshops for elected representatives

➤ Establish ward committees to ensure greater participation of citizens



➤ Ensure integration of technology that will give greater transparency to functioning of elected representative such as creation of a web page and dissemination of e-mail ids of the elected representatives for easier communication



Key Summary Points

- **Extension of Sanctions Holiday:** The US Treasury has issued a short-term extension of its General License for purchasing Russian crude oil already loaded on tankers, providing global refiners a vital regulatory buffer.
- **Mitigating Chokepoint Supply Disruption:** The waiver responds directly to intense downward pressures on international oil supply caused by the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, which usually handles approximately one-fifth of global crude oil transits.
- **Insulating Domestic Inflation Risks:** Analysts view the short-term rolling waivers as an effort by the US administration to suppress global oil price volatility, thereby preventing a sharp spike in retail fuel prices ahead of major domestic elections later this year.
- **Strategic Leverage for Indian Refiners:** The implementation of the waiver legally protects Indian state-owned and private refiners, allowing them to accept deliveries on sanctioned or blocked Russian vessels from firms like Rosneft and Lukoil without facing secondary US sanctions.
- **Reduction of Bilateral Trade Friction:** By formalizing this temporary relief, the US has temporarily removed an immediate point of diplomatic friction with New Delhi, even as Washington continues negotiating with India to reduce its structural reliance on Russian energy imports by 25%.



Key Definitions

- **Sanctions Waiver:** A formal legal exemption granted by a sanctioning country (like the US) that permits foreign entities or nations to engage in specific economic transactions that would otherwise be legally prohibited.
- **Maritime Chokepoint:** A narrow, strategic waterway or canal connecting two larger bodies of water that is critical for global trade, navigation, and energy transport, making it highly vulnerable to military blockades or disruptions.
- **Secondary Sanctions:** Economic penalties applied by a sanctioning nation against third-party foreign individuals or organizations who are not directly subject to its primary domestic jurisdiction, used to enforce extraterritorial trade policies.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 73 of the Indian Constitution:** Specifies that the executive power of the Union extends to all matters where Parliament can make laws, providing the constitutional legal backing for India to enter into sovereign energy procurement agreements.
- **US International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA):** The statutory legal framework that empowers the US President to regulate international commerce and freeze assets in response to an unusual external threat, serving as the foundational law behind global oil sanctions.
- **Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) Guidelines:** The specialized administrative agency of the US Department of the Treasury that administers and enforces economic trade sanctions, possessing the legal authority to issue and revise General Licenses.



Additional Key Insights and Energy Geopolitics

- **The Strait of Hormuz Crisis:** The critical role of the Strait of Hormuz cannot be overstated. With around 2.5 to 2.7 million barrels per day of India's crude imports—accounting for nearly half of its total oil inbound transits—flowing through this chokepoint, any prolonged local conflict makes access to alternative, discounted Russian crude legally shielded by waivers an economic necessity.
- **The Tariff Negotiation Linkage:** The waiver coincides with complex bilateral negotiations where Washington is utilizing the threat of penalizing oil imports to push New Delhi to lower its reliance on Russian infrastructure, while India seeks to scrap a 25% additional penal tariff imposed by the US on other sectors.
- **Windfall Criticism:** The policy faces domestic pushback within Western coalitions from critics who argue that rolling extensions provide an economic windfall to Moscow, directly financing its long-term external military campaigns by maintaining high volumes of energy exports.

Conclusion

The US decision to extend the Russian crude sanctions waiver reflects a triumph of global economic pragmatism over pure geopolitical posturing. Faced with severe maritime supply threats at the Strait of Hormuz, Washington has recognized that choking off Russian oil completely would trigger a domestic and global inflationary spiral. For India, this development reinforces its pursuit of multi-aligned strategic autonomy, showing that maintaining energy security does not require choosing between Western partnerships and vital commercial ties with Moscow.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's strategic interests and sovereignty; Bilateral agreements and institutional actions impacting economic security.
- **GS Paper III (Economy & Security):** Energy security, infrastructure challenges, maritime chokepoints, management of inflation, and global supply chain vulnerabilities.
- **Prelims Value:** Location and mapping of the Strait of Hormuz, functions of OFAC, major oil-exporting corporations (Rosneft, Lukoil), and the legal mechanisms behind international secondary sanctions.