



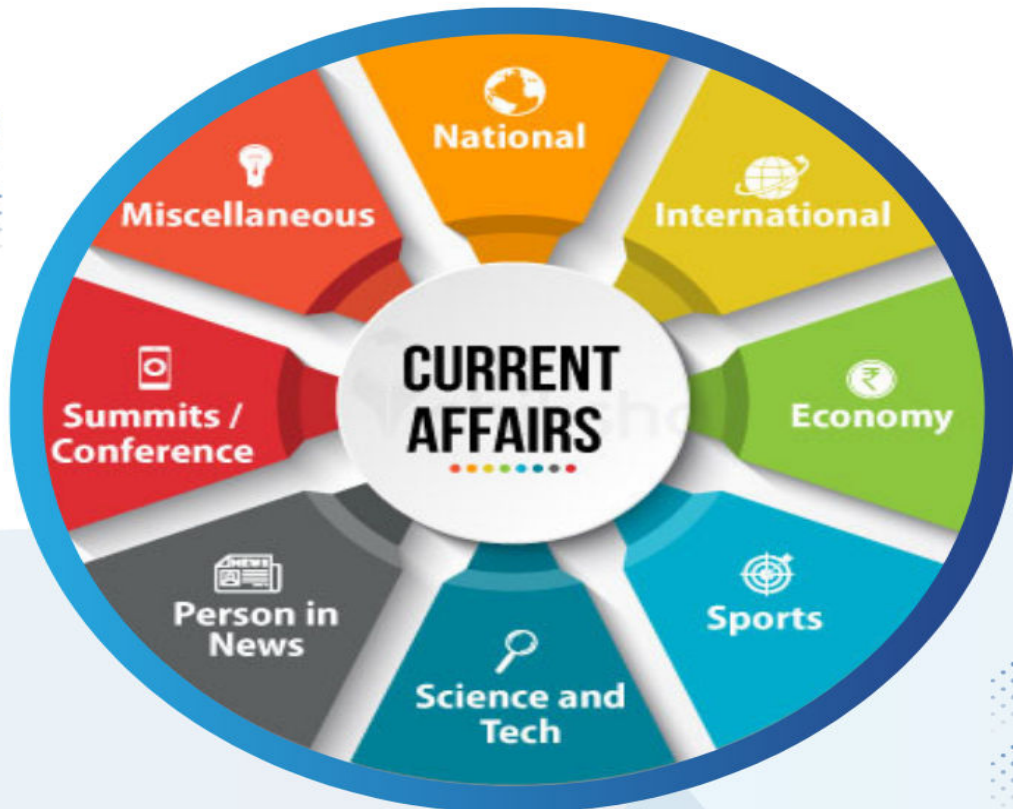
“We help you reach for the star”

# VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

**DATE: 30/05/2026 (SATURDAY)**



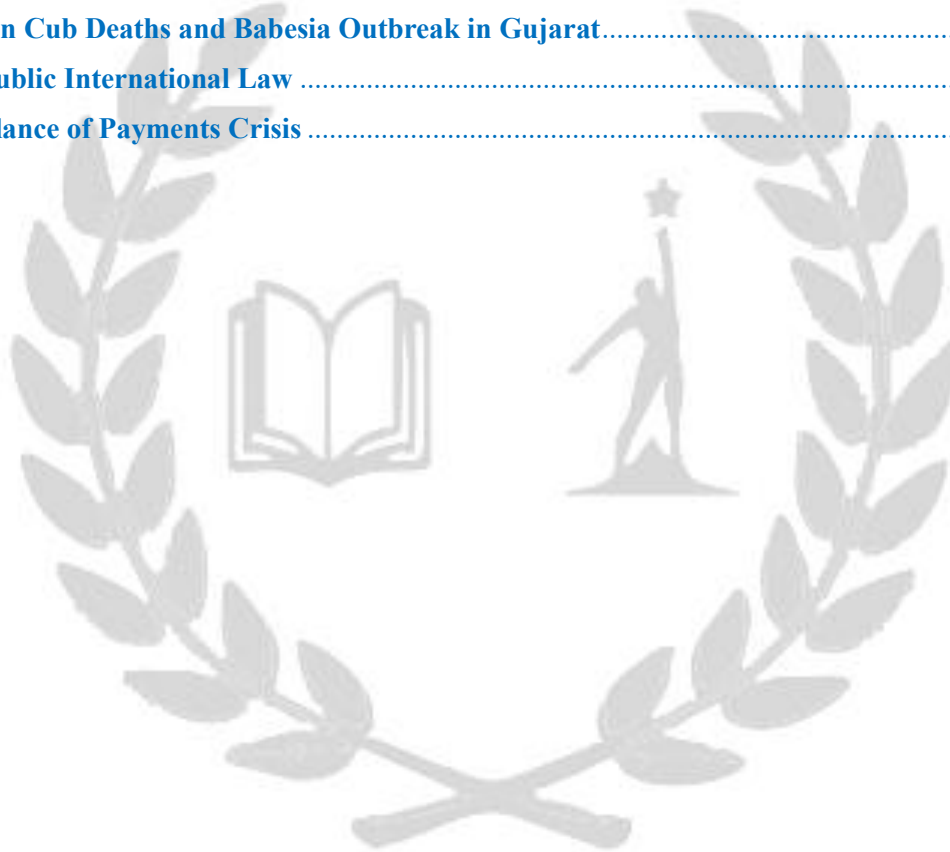
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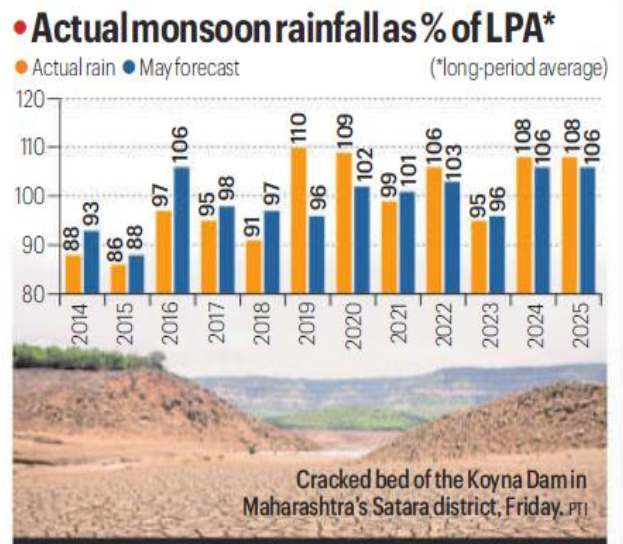


**VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY**



## 1. Indian Monsoon Forecast and Implications

- **Downward Forecast Revision:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has revised its monsoon forecast downward to 90% of the Long Period Average (LPA), signaling the potential for the driest monsoon season in a decade. This revision stems from unfavorable global climate indicators, specifically a strong El Niño phenomenon and adverse Indian Ocean conditions.
- **LPA Benchmarking:** The LPA serves as the baseline for "normal" rainfall, calculated over a 50-year period (currently 1971–2020) and updated decennially. The country-wide baseline for the four-month southwest monsoon season (June to September) stands at 89 cm.
- **Mitigating "Silver Lining":** Despite the deficit forecast, immediate vulnerabilities regarding food security and water scarcity are buffered by ample central foodgrain stocks and adequate water levels in major reservoirs across the country.
- **Historical Context:** The projected 90% of LPA represents the lowest initial forecast issued by the IMD in the last 20 years, highlighting the severe macro-climatic shifts altering traditional precipitation cycles.



### Key Terms, Constitutional Framework, and Institutional Mechanics

#### Key Definitions

- **El Niño:** A climate pattern characterized by the abnormal warming of surface waters in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean. It disrupts global atmospheric circulation, typically weakening the monsoon winds and suppressing rainfall over the Indian subcontinent.
- **Long Period Average (LPA):** The benchmark framework utilized by the IMD to gauge whether a monsoon is normal, deficient, or excess. Precipitation between 96% and 104% of the LPA is classified as a "normal" monsoon.

#### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 39(b) & (c) (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Mandates the State to direct policy toward securing that the ownership and control of material resources are distributed to subserve the common good, placing an obligation on the government to manage food security and water distribution during droughts.
- **The Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Provides the overarching legal institutional framework for drought management, declaration, and mitigation strategies via the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).
- **The Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Empowers the central government to regulate the supply, distribution, and pricing of foodgrains to prevent hoarding and inflation during deficit rainfall periods.



## Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

### Conclusion

While macro-climate disruptions like El Niño threaten agricultural yields through suppressed rainfall, India's enhanced buffer stocks and reservoir management showcase improved structural resilience. Mitigating future risks requires accelerating climate-resilient agriculture and micro-irrigation systems.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Geographical features and their location-changes in critical geographical features (Monsoon mechanisms, El Niño, and climate variations).
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Major crops-cropping patterns, and food security management.

## 2. Supreme Court Directives on Judicial Delays

- **Mandatory Timeline for Judgments:** The Supreme Court (SC) has directed all High Courts to pronounce verdicts within three months of reserving a judgment. This measure addresses systemic delays between the conclusion of hearings and the final delivery of orders.
- **Prioritization of Personal Liberty:** The SC emphasized the need for "extra promptitude" in matters concerning personal liberty and bail. Orders on bail applications should ideally be pronounced and uploaded online on the very same day.
- **Next-Day Upload Mandate:** If a bail order is reserved, it must be pronounced the following day and uploaded to the court website within 24 hours to ensure transparency and quick administrative execution.
- **Reasoned Open-Court Judgments:** The directives mandate that reasoned judgments pronounced in open courts must be accessible on High Court websites within 24 hours, enhancing the litigant's right to seek timely redress.
- **Infringement of Fundamental Rights:** The SC explicitly ruled that undue delay in pronouncing verdicts after concluding arguments is an infringement of the right to personal liberty, providing legal grounds for litigants to challenge systemic judicial inertia.

## Key Terms, Constitutional Framework, and Institutional Mechanics

### Key Definitions

- **Reserved Judgment:** A legal scenario where a judge hears arguments from all parties in a case but delays delivering the final verdict to deliberate on legal points, review evidence, or draft the detailed order.
- **Bail:** The conditional release of an accused person from judicial custody, pending a final judgment, under a financial or personal guarantee to appear in court when required.

ADDRESSES CONCERNS OVER DELAY

## Bail to verdict: SC pushes High Courts to speed up justice

Directs judgment be delivered within 3 months of matter being reserved, uploading of bail plea order the same day

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty):** The SC has repeatedly interpreted the right to a speedy trial and timely justice as an integral part of fair procedure under Article 21. Delaying bail orders directly curtails this fundamental right.



- **Article 141 (Law of the Land):** Orders and directives passed by the Supreme Court are binding on all courts within the territory of India, making these timelines legally enforceable across all High Courts and subordinate judiciaries.
- **Section 353 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) / Section 258 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS):** Governs the pronouncement of judgments in criminal cases, requiring them to be delivered in open court immediately after the termination of the trial or at a subsequent noticed time.

### Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

#### Conclusion

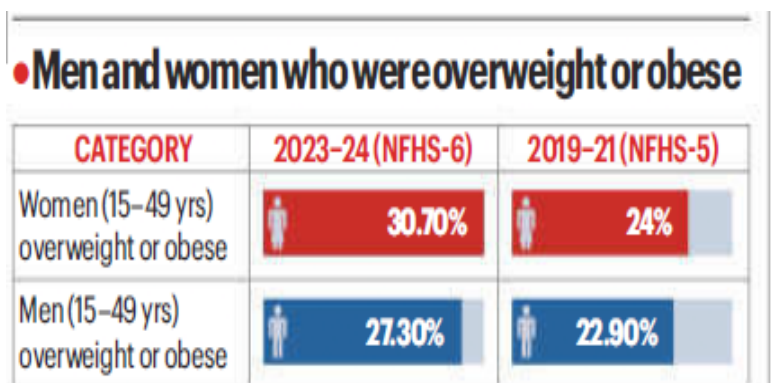
Long-standing judicial delays undermine public trust in the rule of law and turn pre-trial detention into a punitive measure. By establishing rigid timelines for reserving judgments and uploading bail orders, the Supreme Court has reinforced the constitutional primacy of personal liberty and institutional accountability.

#### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Structure, organization, and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary; Important aspects of governance, transparency, and accountability; Fundamental Rights (Article 21 and judicial overreach vs. judicial activism).
- **GS Paper IV:** Ethics in Public Administration; Justice, equity, and procedural fairness within the administrative machinery of the state.

### 3. NFHS-6 Findings on Obesity Trends

- **Surge in Adult Obesity:** The National Family Health Survey-6 (NFHS-6) reveals a sharp increase in the proportion of overweight or obese adults (aged 15–49) over a five-year period between 2019 and 2024.
- **Gender-Based Disparities:** The prevalence of obesity among women jumped by 6.7 percentage points, rising from 24% in NFHS-5 (2019–21) to 30.70% in NFHS-6 (2023–24). For men, the figure increased by 4.4 percentage points, from 22.90% to 27.30%.
- **Urban-Rural Divide:** Obesity remains significantly higher in urban areas compared to rural regions. Urban areas recorded 42.8% of women and 36.3% of men as overweight or obese, compared to 25.5% of women and 23% of men in rural localities.
- **Co-morbidities Escalation:** Alongside the spike in adult obesity, the survey highlights a corresponding rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs), specifically diabetes and high blood pressure, indicating a growing metabolic disease burden.
- **Survey Scope and Agency:** Conducted by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai, as the nodal agency, NFHS-6 covered 6.79 lakh households across 715 districts in India (excluding Manipur).





## Key Terms, Constitutional Framework, and Institutional Mechanics

### Key Definitions

- **Obesity/Overweight:** Formally classified by the WHO based on Body Mass Index (BMI). For the South Asian population, a BMI between 23.0 and 24.9 kg/m<sup>2</sup> is classified as overweight, and a BMI of 25.0 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or higher is classified as obese due to higher metabolic risks at lower body weights.
- **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs):** Chronic medical conditions that are non-infectious and non-transmissible among people, typically driven by a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental, and behavioral factors.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 47 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Imposes a primary constitutional duty on the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people, and to improve public health as a fundamental governance principle.
- **National Health Policy, 2017:** Aims to reduce premature mortality from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory diseases by 25% by 2025 through preventive and promotive healthcare frameworks.
- **National Programme for Prevention and Control of NCDs (NP-NCD):** Launched under the National Health Mission (NHM) to establish infrastructure, build human resource capacity, and promote lifestyle modifications to curb metabolic disorders.

### Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

#### Conclusion

The findings from NFHS-6 highlight a critical epidemiological shift from undernutrition to overnutrition and metabolic syndromes in India. Addressing this dual burden of malnutrition requires integrated public health interventions, fiscal policies on ultra-processed foods, and institutional promotion of active lifestyles to mitigate the long-term economic and healthcare strain.

#### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources; Government policies and interventions.
- **GS Paper III:** Issues of food security, nutrition security, and the macroeconomic impact of NCDs on India's demographic dividend.

## 4. NIA Court Pendency and UAPA Trial Delays

- **Institutional Pendency Crisis:** A severe gap exists between Supreme Court (SC) directives for timebound Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) trials and reality, exemplified by Delhi's Patiala House National Investigation Agency (NIA) Court handling 43 UAPA cases—eight times the SC's recommended baseline of 10 cases per judge.
- **Frequent Judicial Transfers:** Frequent transfers undermine judicial continuity; the Delhi NIA court has seen five judges since September 2022, with predecessors averaging an 11-month tenure. This forces replacement judges to hear complex arguments afresh, significantly lengthening trial durations.
- **SC Structural Guidelines:** To enable timebound disposal, the SC mandated that if more than 15 trials are pending within a High Court's jurisdiction, two exclusive NIA courts must be set up,



scaling to three courts if trials exceed 25. It also ruled that NIA judges should not be burdened with additional work.

- **National Disparity in Special Courts:**

Across India, only 3 of 53 designated NIA courts deal exclusively with NIA matters, while 18 have zero pending cases. This highlights deep structural mismatches in judicial resource allocation.

- **State-Level Backlogs:** States show extreme variations in backlogs; Chhattisgarh holds the highest volume at 73 cases across 4 dedicated courts, whereas Jammu & Kashmir faces 71 cases and Jharkhand faces 52 cases with only 1 dedicated court each.
- **Impact on Undertrials:** With an average case disposal time stretching between three to seven years—vastly exceeding the SC's one-month expectation—extended delays lead to prolonged incarceration of undertrials due to strict bail thresholds under anti-terror laws.

### • NIA COURT PENDENCY

- Only 18 of 53 designated NIA courts have no pending cases.

- Only 3 of 53 designated NIA courts deal exclusively with NIA cases.

- Jharkhand (28), Delhi (19), J&K (16), West Bengal (13), Chhattisgarh, Kerala and TN (8 each), Assam and Gujarat (6 each) rank the highest in terms of cases



pending for at least 5 yrs, or more

- Chhattisgarh: Highest number of cases under trial at 73, with 4 NIA dedicated courts.

- J&K, with 71 cases, has only 1 court; as does Jharkhand with 52 cases

- Delhi, with 44 cases and 2 NIA courts; West Bengal, with 38 cases and 3 courts

## Key Terms, Constitutional Framework, and Institutional Mechanics

### Key Definitions

- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA):** India's primary anti-terror legislation designed to provide more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and associations, and for dealing with terrorist activities.
- **Special NIA Courts:** Special courts constituted by the Central Government under Section 11 or Section 22 of the NIA Act, 2008, for the trial of scheduled offenses like terrorism, espionage, and counterfeiting.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21 (Right to a Speedy Trial):** The Supreme Court recognizes the right to a speedy trial as an implicit fundamental right under Article 21. Prolonged pre-trial detention without trial progression constitutes a direct violation of personal liberty.
- **Section 43D(5) of UAPA:** Imposes stringent statutory restrictions on bail, making it nearly impossible for an accused to secure release if the court finds prima facie ground that the accusation is true. This heightens the necessity for rapid trial completion.
- **Section 19 of the NIA Act, 2008:** Mandates that trials by Special Courts shall have precedence over all other trials and shall be held on a day-to-day basis until conclusion.

### Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

#### Conclusion

The mismatch between the statutory intent of the NIA Act and the practical capacity of Special Courts undermines counter-terrorism judicial infrastructure. Ensuring structural continuity through longer judicial tenures and strictly implementing the Supreme Court's case-to-court scaling ratios are vital steps to uphold procedural justice and state security.



## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Structure, organization, and functioning of the Judiciary; Statutory, regulatory, and various quasi-judicial bodies; Mechanisms for the protection of fundamental rights.
- **GS Paper III:** Challenges to internal security; Linkages of organized crime with terrorism; Security challenges and their management.

## 5. Kalai-II Hydrel Project Forest Clearance and Ecological Concerns

- **In-Principle Forest Clearance:** The Environment Ministry's Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) has granted Stage-I (in-principle) forest clearance to the 1,200 MW Kalai-II Hydroelectric Project proposed on the Lohit River in Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Extensive Forest Diversion:** The project involves clearing 869.35 hectares of semi-evergreen forest land, including areas classified as very dense and moderately dense forests, which will require the felling of over 33,338 trees across the Namsai and Anjaw forest divisions.
- **Habitat Threat to Rare Species:** The diversion directly impacts the critical riverine habitat of the critically endangered White-Bellied Heron, as well as other prominent wildlife such as the Hoolock gibbon, leopard, capped langur, and Assamese macaque.
- **Mandatory Wildlife Plan Vetting:** Although local state officials reported no recent sightings in the immediate diversion zone, the FAC noted the bird's recorded presence in the broader landscape and mandated that the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) vet the project's wildlife management plan.
- **Inter-State Compensatory Afforestation:** Because Arunachal Pradesh maintains a high forest cover exceeding two-thirds of its geographical area, the compensatory afforestation for this project will be carried out on degraded forest land in Madhya Pradesh.
- **Strategic Run-of-the-River Infrastructure:** Developed by central PSU THDC India Limited at an estimated cost of ₹14,176.26 crore, this run-of-the-river project with pondage near the India-China border features a 128.5-meter concrete gravity dam and an underground powerhouse.

## Key Terms, Constitutional Framework, and Institutional Mechanics

### Key Definitions

- **White-Bellied Heron (*Ardea insignis*):** The second-largest heron species globally, strictly dependent on undisturbed, fast-flowing Himalayan riverine ecosystems. It is classified as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.
- **Forest Advisory Committee (FAC):** A statutory body composed of independent experts and forestry officials that functions within the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) to review proposals involving the diversion of forest lands for non-forestry purposes.

**Kalai-II Hydro Electric Power Project**

Powering Arunachal Pradesh, Empowering India

**Approved Capacity**  
1200 MW

**Location**  
Lohit River, Anjaw District, Arunachal Pradesh

**Cabinet Approval**  
₹14,105.83 Crore  
(Approved on 16th Dec 2021)

**Project Type**  
Run-of-the-River Scheme

**Purpose**  
To meet the growing power demand and boost renewable energy capacity

**Significance**  
India's first hydro project on the Lohit River, contributing to clean energy and regional development

**About Kalai-II Hydro Project**  
Kalai-II is a run-of-the-river hydroelectric project proposed on the Lohit River. With an installed capacity of 1200 MW, it will play a crucial role in strengthening India's renewable energy basket and ensuring sustainable development in Arunachal Pradesh.

Clean Energy. Stronger Future. Stronger India.



## Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (Directive Principles of State Policy):** 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 every citizen of India with the duty to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980:** Governs the legal framework for the diversion of forest land. Stage-I in-principle clearance lays down binding conditions (like compensatory afforestation) that the developer must fulfill before formal execution.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Places the White-Bellied Heron under Schedule I, granting it the highest level of legal protection and prohibiting any deliberate habitat destruction or hunting.

## Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

### Conclusion

The Kalai-II project emphasizes India's strategic balancing act between expanding renewable energy capacity along border regions and preserving sensitive Himalayan biodiversity hotspots. Mitigating these ecological externalities requires strict adherence to landscape-level conservation plans formulated by bodies like the WII to protect vulnerable indicator species.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Conservation, environmental pollution, and degradation, environmental impact assessment (EIA); Infrastructure: Energy (Hydropower vs. Eco-preservation).
- **GS Paper I:** Distribution of key natural resources; Changes in critical geographical features and flora/fauna impact.

## 6. Proposed Changes to BSF Mandate and Territorial Security

- **Shift to Territorial Security:** The Central Government is considering an expansion of the Border Security Force (BSF) operational mandate, transitioning from the traditional doctrine of "border security" to a holistic concept of "territorial security."
- **Quadrangular Integration:** The newly proposed operational framework introduces a quadrangular concept that integrates the public, civic administration, local police, and the military, with the BSF maintaining the primary leadership responsibility.
- **Smart Border Suraksha Project:** The initiative aims to fortify India's international borders shared with Pakistan and Bangladesh by deploying an advanced security grid financed via major central capital investment.
- **Technological Force Multipliers:** The updated security infrastructure shifts heavily toward modern surveillance assets, utilizing a multi-layered grid composed of drones, high-resolution radar, watchtowers, and advanced technology to assist active jawans.
- **Strategic Announcement:** The policy reassessment was announced by the Union Home Minister during an operational review at the G-7 and G-13 border outposts located in Bhuj, Kutch, coinciding with the 60th foundation year of the BSF.





## Key Terms, Constitutional Framework, and Institutional Mechanics

### Key Definitions

- **Border Security:** A localized defensive strategy focused strictly on guarding physical border lines against infiltration, cross-border smuggling, and illegal immigration.
- **Territorial Security:** A broader geopolitical strategy encompassing internal security coordination, community policing in border tracts, civic integration, and hybrid warfare defense.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 355 of the Constitution:** Explicitly places the duty on the Union to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance, providing the primary constitutional basis for deploying central armed forces like the BSF.
- **Seventh Schedule (List I - Union List):** Entry 2 places the "Naval, military and air forces; any other armed forces of the Union" under the exclusive legislative domain of Parliament.
- **The Border Security Force Act, 1968:** The parent statutory framework regulating the constitution, governance, and specific jurisdiction of the force. Sections within the Act allow the Central Government to alter the geographic and functional scope of the BSF's powers through official gazette notifications.

### Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

#### Conclusion

Transitioning the BSF from a perimeter-guarding unit to a territorial security leader addresses the evolving nature of hybrid threats. Integrating local administration and high-tech tools ensures enhanced national security while minimizing coordination friction between central forces and state police agencies.

#### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Security challenges and their management in border areas; Linkages of organized crime with terrorism; Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.
- **GS Paper II:** Federal structure challenges (jurisdictional overlap between Central Armed Police Forces and state police departments).

## 7. Inflation Dynamics vs. Consumer Affordability

- **Inflation vs. Affordability Gap:** While India's retail inflation rate has largely remained controlled within the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 2% to 6% comfort zone, individual household budgets face an "affordability crisis" due to the compounding effect of past price hikes.
- **Cumulative Price Rise Burden:** High headline inflation rates in preceding years have permanently elevated the base price level. The general price level grew by 41% between March 2019 and March 2026, meaning consumers pay significantly more for the same basket of goods despite lower current inflation rates.
- **Lagging Real Incomes:** Data from the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) indicates that between 2018 and 2024, income growth for regular salaried employees and self-employed individuals lagged behind the cumulative rise in the general price level, resulting in a drop in real purchasing power.



- **Vulnerability of Casual Labour:** Casual laborers recorded faster wage growth relative to other categories but remain the most economically vulnerable in absolute terms, earning an average of only ₹13,590 per month in 2025–26.
- **Shift in Workforce Composition:** Reflecting distressed economic adjustments, the share of self-employed individuals—the category worst hit by the affordability crisis—grew rapidly, while the share of regular salaried workers declined.
- **Monetary Policy Limitations:** The RBI's inflation-targeting tools can manage aggregate demand through interest rates but cannot directly catalyze structural income growth or address supply-side shocks like geopolitical disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.

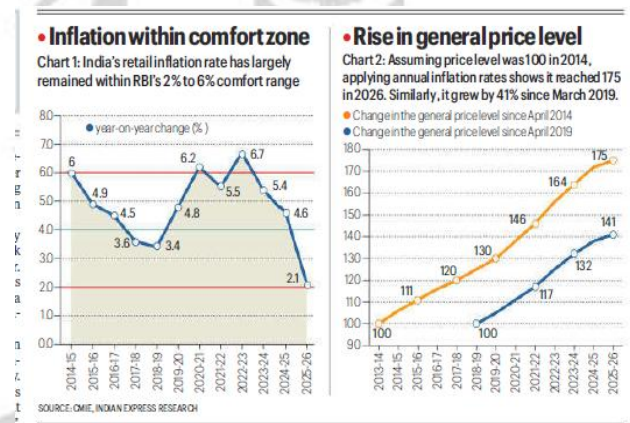
## Key Terms, Constitutional Framework, and Institutional Mechanics

### Key Definitions

- **Headline Inflation:** The raw inflation figure reported through the Consumer Price Index (CPI), reflecting the total inflation within an economy including volatile commodities like food and fuel.
- **Affordability:** An economic measure of a consumer's ability to purchase goods and services, determined by comparing nominal income growth directly against changes in the cumulative price index.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 38 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Mandates the State to promote the welfare of the people by securing a social order characterized by economic justice and to minimize inequalities in income, status, and opportunities.
- **The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act, 1934:** Amended in 2016 to provide a statutory basis for the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC). The MPC is legally tasked with maintaining price stability with an explicit inflation target of 4% (with a tolerance band of +/-2%).



## Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

### Conclusion

A low inflation rate does not automatically translate to consumer affordability if historic price increases have permanently outpaced nominal wage growth. Bridging this gap requires transitioning from pure monetary tightening to structural fiscal policies that boost high-quality formal employment and real household income.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Inflationary trends and monetary policy transmission mechanisms.
- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population; Issues relating to poverty and hunger.



## 8. Quad's Strategic Challenges and Divergent Member Objectives

- **Incremental Progress Amid Disparities:** The recent Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) Foreign Ministers meeting in New Delhi underscored the group's ongoing struggle to transform conceptual alignment into decisive action due to the varying strategic objectives of its member states.
- **Divergent Strategic Priorities:** Each member views the threat landscape differently: the US seeks a network to counter China and anchor its Indo-Pacific strategy; Australia requires security partnerships to resist Chinese posturing while remaining economically dependent on Beijing; Tokyo focuses on maritime security in the South China Sea; and India aims to balance China along its land border while preserving its strategic autonomy.
- **Key Non-Military Initiatives:** To transition from dialogue to tangible outcomes, the meeting advanced practical cooperation on maritime surveillance coordination, an energy security framework, supply chain resilience, and a critical minerals operation.
- **Infrastructure Deliverables:** The grouping announced its inaugural joint physical project—the development of port infrastructure in Fiji—aiming to counter China's infrastructure diplomacy and reduce regional reliance on Beijing.
- **Geopolitical Backlash:** China strongly opposes the grouping, characterizing it as an exclusive clique designed to foster bloc confrontation, with Chinese officials historically dismissing the alliance as temporary "sea foam."



### Key Terms, Constitutional Framework, and Institutional Mechanics

#### Key Definitions

- **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad):** An informal strategic forum comprising India, the United States, Japan, and Australia, maintained by semi-regular summits, information exchanges, and joint military exercises.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** A foreign policy doctrine wherein a nation state maintains its independence to pursue national interests and form partnerships without entering binding multi-state military alliances.

#### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Instructs the Indian State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **The Allocation of Business Rules, 1961:** Vests the executive authority over international relations, treaty negotiations, and diplomatic representations exclusively with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** The legal bedrock guiding Quad's foundational commitment to maintaining a "free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific" and upholding freedom of navigation.



## Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

### Conclusion

The Quad's long-term efficacy depends on its capacity to balance India's insistence on strategic autonomy with the collective security expectations of its partners. Shifting the focus from explicit military alignment to concrete geo-economic projects, like the Fiji port development, offers a sustainable path forward.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper I:** Securing global sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) and maritime boundaries within the Indo-Pacific geographic realm.

## 9. RBI Annual Report: Economic Headwinds, Scams, and Growth Projections

- **Macroeconomic Headwinds:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Annual Report for FY26 warns that escalating geopolitical conflicts, specifically the West Asia crisis and US-Iran tensions, pose near-term risks to India's short-run growth and inflation trajectories by triggering supply chain disruptions and volatile energy prices.
- **Positive Growth Outlook:** Despite global uncertainties, India's macroeconomic outlook remains structurally positive, with the central bank projecting a real GDP growth rate of 6.9% for FY27, though risk factors remain tilted toward the downside.
- **Financial Market Overvaluation:** The report flags potential overvaluation in technology sectors, noting that elevated equity valuations may undergo market corrections, adding vulnerabilities to corporate earnings and loan portfolio performance.
- **Proposed 'Kill Switch' for Scams:** To combat rampant digital payment fraud and bolster consumer trust, the RBI is examining a centralized "kill switch" mechanism—an emergency button integrated into payment applications allowing users to instantly freeze all banking operations if a scam is suspected.
- **Spike in Bank Fraud Volume:** While the absolute number of fraud cases dropped to 10,114 from 23,722 in the previous year, the total financial value involved in bank fraud shot up significantly by 46%, reaching ₹48,021 crore in FY26. Public sector banks accounted for the largest share at ₹35,709 crore.

### RBI plans 'kill switch': How it can stop scams

ENS Economic Bureau  
Mumbai, May 29

THE RESERVE BANK of India is exploring the possibility of introducing a 'kill switch' mechanism that would allow users at the receiving end of a potential digital scam to immediately stop all financial transactions from their accounts.

Besides, it has also proposed a 'switch on' and 'switch off' facility for all digital payment modes. It would help bolster consumer confidence and contribute towards con-

trolling frauds in digital payment transactions, the RBI Annual Report said.

The proposal for a 'kill switch' — being examined by the government and the RBI — envisages, among other possibilities, an emergency button integrated into payment applications of lenders that could instantly freeze all banking operations when a user suspects they are being targeted by fraudsters.



FULL REPORT ON  
[WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM](http://WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM)

## Key Terms, Constitutional Framework, and Institutional Mechanics

### Key Definitions

- **Real GDP Growth:** An inflation-adjusted measure that reflects the value of all goods and services produced by an economy in a given year, expressed in base-year prices to capture true economic output.



- **Kill Switch:** A cybersecurity and consumer protection protocol designed to immediately halt financial transactions or deactivate digital access to sensitive bank accounts to mitigate ongoing cyber attacks or digital monetary scams.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **The Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934:** Provides the comprehensive legislative foundation for the operational powers of the RBI, including its role as the regulator and supervisor of the domestic financial system.
- **The Banking Regulation Act, 1949:** Grants the RBI statutory powers to inspect, control, and direct banking entities in India to protect depositor interests and prevent corporate malpractices.
- **The Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007:** Empowers the RBI to regulate and supervise all electronic payment systems, providing the necessary legal backing to mandate technical solutions like the digital "kill switch."

### Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

#### Conclusion

The RBI's annual review highlights a resilient domestic economy capable of steady growth, balanced against acute external geopolitical risks and a qualitative surge in digital financial fraud. Securing long-term stability requires building proactive supply-side buffers and implementing robust institutional cybersecurity safeguards like integrated payment kill switches.

#### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Banking system structure and non-performing assets (NPAs); Cyber security and money laundering challenges.
- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

## 10. Asiatic Lion Cub Deaths and Babesia Outbreak in Gujarat

- **Severe Cub Mortality:** Eight Asiatic lion cubs have died in Gujarat's Gir Somnath and Amreli districts due to a suspected outbreak of Babesiosis, raising immediate conservation alarms.
- **Intensified Vector Control:** The Gujarat Forest Department has launched large-scale tick-removal operations and disease-control protocols in and around the Gir Wildlife Sanctuary to eliminate the disease vectors.
- **Rigid Containment Protocol:** To halt transmission, authorities have established a 10-km containment radius where resident lions are being isolated and actively monitored by specialized veterinary frontline teams.
- **Diagnostic Mobilization:** Tissue and blood samples from the deceased cubs have been dispatched to the Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre (GBRC) to definitively confirm the pathological strain.
- **Population Concentration Risk:** The outbreak underscores the extreme vulnerability of the world's only wild Asiatic lion population, which stood at 891 individuals spread across a single consolidated landscape during the 2025 census.



## Key Terms, Constitutional Framework, and Institutional Mechanics

### Key Definitions

- **Babesiosis:** A tick-borne disease caused by intraerythrocytic protozoan parasites of the genus *Babesia*. It invades and destroys red blood cells, causing severe hemolytic anemia, fever, nasal discharge, extreme weakness, and potential organ failure in wild felids.
- **Asiatic Lion (*Panthera leo persica*):** A distinct lion subspecies restricted entirely to Gujarat's Gir landscape. It is classified under Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, and listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List.



### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (Directive Principles):** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duties):** Assigns a fundamental duty to every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Provides the stringent statutory framework for the absolute protection of Schedule I species like the Asiatic lion, mandating immediate central and state intervention during ecological or health crises.

### Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

#### Conclusion

The cub fatalities due to Babesiosis emphasize the existential peril of maintaining an entire endangered species within a single geographic zone. While immediate epidemiological isolation and vector eradication are vital short-term solutions, long-term survival demands active consideration of geographical diversification, such as the Kuno National Park translocation project, to build resilience against catastrophic disease outbreaks.

#### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Conservation, environmental degradation, and biodiversity; Wildlife disease management; Threats to endangered species and single-population vulnerabilities.
- **GS Paper I:** Biogeography and critical changes in flora and fauna distribution in sensitive ecological zones.

## 11. Crisis in Public International Law

- **Erosion of Rules-Based Order:** The global legal architecture—built on foundational pillars like the UN Charter, Geneva Conventions, and UNCLOS—is rapidly fraying due to structural impunity and systematic norm violations by major powers.
- **Violations of Territorial Sovereignty:** Foundational principles prohibiting the unilateral use of force have been severely compromised by high-profile actions, including the 2003 Iraq invasion, the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, and the 2026 U.S.-Israeli military operations against Iran.



- **Maritime Law and Commons Defiance:** Global maritime stability is under threat through continuous violations of UNCLOS, exemplified by China's enforcement of its rejected "nine-dash line" in the South China Sea and unilateral blockades in the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Humanitarian and Arms-Control Collapse:** International humanitarian law is being compromised across conflict zones like Gaza, Syria, and Tigray, while the termination of key arms-control treaties (INF, Open Skies) has renewed the threat of unrestricted nuclear proliferation.
- **Institutional Enforcement Vacuum:** The international legal framework is crippled by a systemic enforcement deficit, driven by geopolitical paralysis within the UN Security Council, jurisdiction limits of the International Criminal Court, and an over-reliance on voluntary compliance.



## Key Terms, Constitutional Framework, and Institutional Mechanics

### Key Definitions

- **Public International Law:** A body of rules, norms, and legal principles that govern the rights, duties, and operational conduct of sovereign states and international organizations in their mutual interactions.
- **Rules-Based Order:** A global governance paradigm where international relations are regulated by transparent, shared legal agreements and multilateral institutions rather than by raw military or economic dominance.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Explicitly obligates the Indian State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **Article 2(4) of the UN Charter:** Standard international law prohibiting the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.
- **Seventh Schedule (List I - Union List), Entry 13:** Grants the Parliament of India exclusive legislative competence over participation in international conferences, associations, and implementation of decisions made thereat.

### Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

#### Conclusion

The degradation of international law from a binding obligation into an optional framework signals a dangerous return to geopolitical anarchy. Preserving global stability demands revitalizing multilateral accountability mechanisms, enforcing treaty compliance symmetrically, and reforming deadlocked collective institutions to ensure that principle, rather than power, dictates international legality.

#### UPSC Relevance

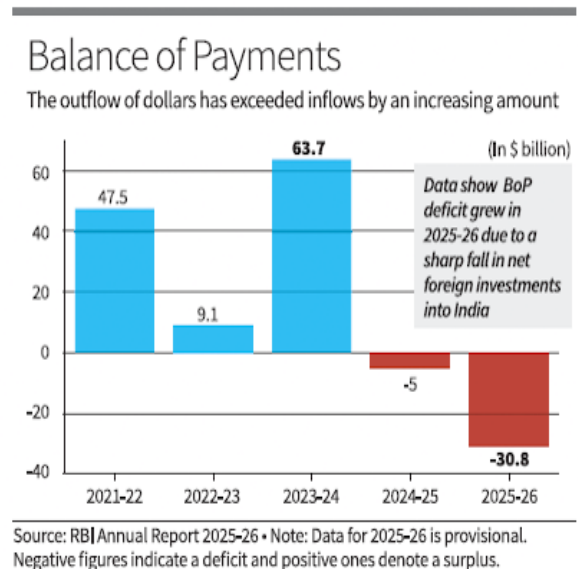
- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Important international institutions, agencies, and fora (UNSC, ICC, UNCLOS) - their structure and mandate.



- **GS Paper IV:** International relations and funding ethics; Moral dimensions of global governance and unilateral state behavior.

## 12. India's Balance of Payments Crisis

- **Surging BoP Deficit:** India's Balance of Payments (BoP) recorded a deficit of \$30.8 billion in 2025-26, marking a six-fold increase over the previous fiscal year and a complete reversal from recent surpluses.
- **Capital Account Shrinkage:** The capital account surplus collapsed by over 99.5%, plunging to just \$72 million due to massive Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) outflows of \$4.3 billion and residents parking funds abroad.
- **Widening Current Account Deficit:** The Current Account Deficit (CAD) hit a three-year high of \$30.2 billion as the contraction in India's services surplus outpaced the marginal improvement in the merchandise trade deficit.
- **Depletion of Forex Reserves:** The entire \$30.8 billion BoP deficit was financed by drawing down the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) foreign exchange reserves, significantly denting the nation's import cover.
- **Immediate Policy Interventions:** To contain dollar outflows driven by inelastic imports, the government hiked import duties on gold and silver from 6% to 15% and restricted silver imports alongside state advisories to curb fuel consumption.



## Key Terms, Constitutional Framework, and Institutional Mechanics

### Key Definitions

- **Balance of Payments (BoP):** A systematic economic record of all financial and economic transactions conducted between the residents of a country and the rest of the world over a specific time period.
- **Current Account Deficit (CAD):** A measurement of a country's trade where the total value of goods, services, and transfers it imports exceeds the total value of products it exports.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 246 (Seventh Schedule - Union List):** Entry 41 grants Parliament exclusive legislative competence over "Trade and commerce with foreign countries; import and export across customs frontiers," empowering the Centre to alter import tariffs.
- **The Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** The primary statutory framework giving the RBI and the central government powers to regulate foreign exchange payments, cross-border capital transfers, and capital account transactions.



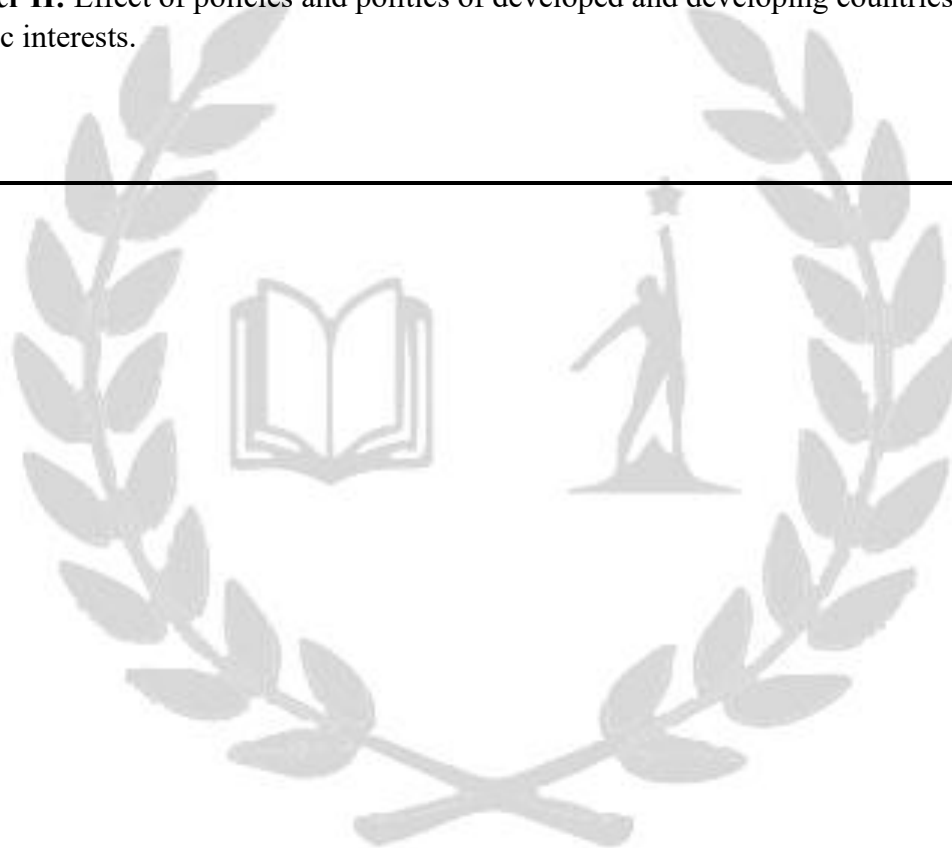
## Conclusion & UPSC Relevance

### Conclusion

The dramatic widening of India's BoP deficit highlights a structural vulnerability to global capital flight and inelastic import reliance. Reversing this trend demands moving beyond short-term tariff hikes on gold toward systemic export diversification, integration into global value chains, and aggressive transition toward domestic renewable energy to permanently reduce the crude oil import bill.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Balance of Payments, CAD, and Forex management.
- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's economic interests.



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