



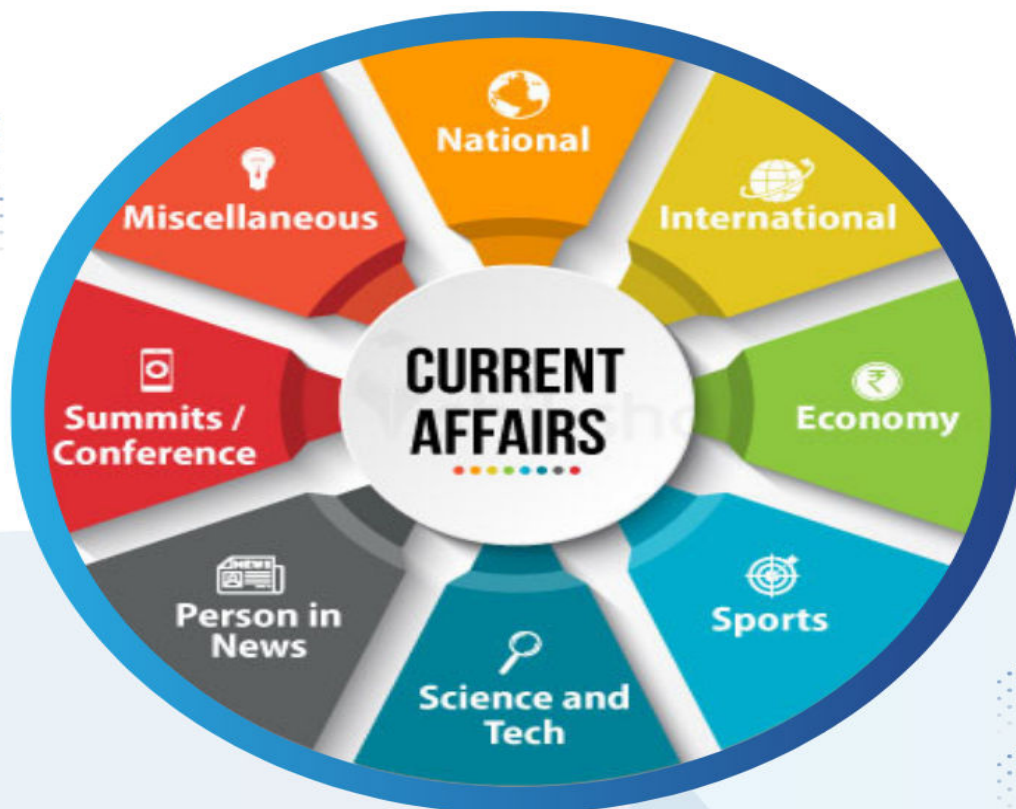
“ We help you reach for the star ”

# VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

## DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

**DATE: 01/06/2026 (MONDAY)**



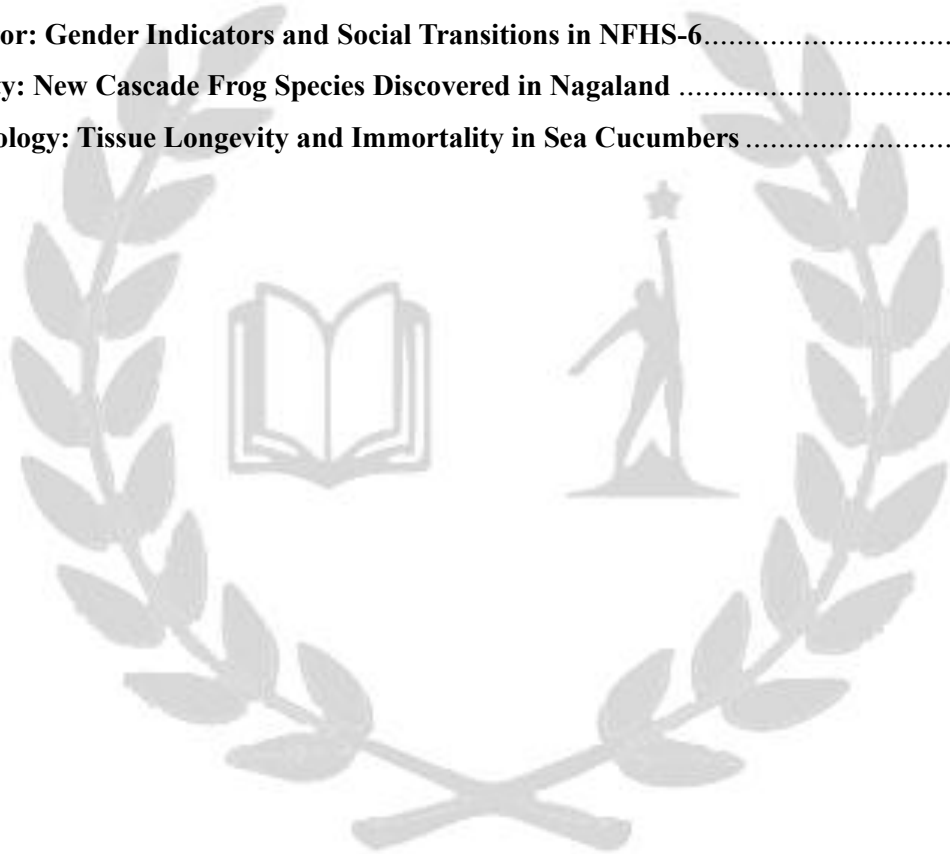
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VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



## 1. NFHS-6 Findings: Maharashtra Health Trends

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6) for 2023-24 highlights critical shifts in Maharashtra’s healthcare landscape, emphasizing a rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) alongside mixed outcomes in maternal and child health.

### Key Highlights & Summary

- **Surge in C-Section Deliveries:** Institutional births reached 96.4%, but every third delivery (33.6%) was via Caesarean section (up from 25.4% in NFHS-5). Private hospitals reported significantly higher rates (48.5%) than public facilities (23.8%).
- **Rising Obesity Epidemic:** Nearly every third individual is now obese. Obesity spiked from 23.5% to 31.1% in women, and from 24.7% to 32.8% in men, driven heavily by urban lifestyles.
- **Escalating Diabetes & Hypertension:** Diabetes incidence rose to 16% for women and 17.7% for men. Urban areas face a higher burden, with roughly 20% of the population reporting elevated blood sugar levels.
- **Positive Nutritional Shifts:** Child malnutrition indicators improved, with stunting among children under five dropping from 35.2% to 29.5%, and wasting declining from 25.6% to 19.9%.
- **Immunization vs. Breastfeeding:** Full vaccination coverage for children aged 12-23 months improved to over 80%. However, exclusive breastfeeding for infants below six months saw a concerning drop from 71% to 64.7%.

### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Stunting:** Low height-for-age, reflecting chronic undernutrition.
- **Wasting:** Low weight-for-height, indicating acute undernutrition or recent severe weight loss.
- **Institutional Birth:** Deliveries occurring in medical facilities, ensuring access to skilled obstetric care.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 47 (DPSP):** Enjoins the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health.
- **Article 21:** The Right to Life includes the right to health and affordable medical care.
- **National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:** Legalizes the right to food and nutritional security through schemes like PM POSHAN and ICDS.

HEALTH INDICATORS			
WHAT WENT UP			
Indicator	NHFS-6	NHFS-5	% Change
Health cover	37.2	15.9	21.3
Kids (2-4 yrs) going to pre-school	30.4	15.1	15.3
C-sections (private institutions)	47.3	39.4	7.9
Prevalence of diarrhoea (2 weeks before survey)	13.0	5.6	7.4
6-8 months kids getting solid or semi-solid food and breastmilk	59.6	31	28.6
Underweight kids under 5 yrs	34.5	32.1	2.4
Tobacco use in women	9.6	8.5	1.1
Alcohol consumption in men	18.7	14.5	4.2
Homes with power connection	95.8	91.0	4.8
Women using internet	70.0	30.6	39.4
WHAT CAME DOWN			
Institutional births	51.8	57.7	-5.9
Kids under 6 months (breastfed)	34.6	59.7	-25.1
Overweight kids under 5 yrs	0.5	3.1	-2.6
Kids (9-35 months) with Vitamin A dose in last 6 months	65.4	73.9	-8.5
Stunted children under 5	31.5	39.7	-8.2
Decision making by women	85.9	87.6	-1.7
Hygienic menstruation	69.2	72.9	-3.7
Women facing spousal violence	28.5	34.9	-6.4
Iodized salt use	86.5	92.2	-5.7
<b>Total fertility rate</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>-0.2</b>

(With inputs from Anjanaya Singh)

### Additional Key Insights

The data exposes a stark urban-rural divide and a commercial bias in maternal care, where private sectors overshoot the WHO’s recommended C-section threshold of 10-15%. The dual burden of undernutrition (wasting/stunting) and overnutrition (obesity) presents a complex policy challenge.



## Conclusion

NFHS-6 underscores that while Maharashtra has progressed in clinical interventions like institutional deliveries and immunization, it faces a structural crisis in lifestyle diseases and private healthcare regulation. Addressing this requires a preventive healthcare approach targeting urban wellness alongside stricter audits of private obstetric practices.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.
- **GS Paper III:** Issues of growth, development, and demographic dividend.
- **Prelims:** Socio-economic indicators, health indices, and mandates of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

## 2. Epidemic Control: Gir Asiatic Lions Stabilization

The Gujarat Forest and Environment Department has successfully contained a recent viral outbreak in the Gir landscape, reporting zero Asiatic lion deaths over a consecutive three-day period following critical veterinary interventions.

### Key Highlights & Summary

- **Outbreak and Containment:** The viral infection initially led to the tragic death of eight Asiatic lion cubs in the Gir ecosystem, triggering immediate high-level state intervention.
- **Current Status:** Intensive monitoring and rapid veterinary care have successfully stabilized the situation, with no new casualties reported over three consecutive days.
- **Infection Load:** A total of 17 other lions were identified as infected and are currently undergoing specialized medical treatment and isolation.
- **Ground Infrastructure:** Key frontline facilities, including the Jamwala Rescue Centre, Jasadhar Animal Care Centre, and the Babariya forest range, are serving as focal points for medical containment.
- **Administrative Response:** Field reviews by the Forest Ministry confirmed that heightened surveillance protocols and dedicated veterinary teams have brought the outbreak under control.



### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Asiatic Lion (*Panthera leo persica*):** A genetically distinct lion population restricted entirely to the Gir National Park and surrounding landscapes in Gujarat.
- **Viral Outbreak/Epizootic:** A rapid spread of an infectious disease among an animal population within a specific geographic region, similar to an epidemic in humans.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.



- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duties):** Places a duty on every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Categorizes the Asiatic Lion under Schedule I, providing it the highest legal protection against poaching, hunting, and habitat destruction.

### Additional Key Insights

The Gir ecosystem faces severe ecological vulnerability due to its status as the single isolated habitat for wild Asiatic lions. Past crises, such as the 2018 Canine Distemper Virus (CDV) outbreak, underscore that single-population concentration leaves the species highly susceptible to extinction from localized epidemics, making genetic diversification and potential translocation critical long-term strategies.

### Conclusion

While immediate veterinary interventions have checked the current viral spike, the incident reinforces the ecological risk of maintaining a single, dense population of an endangered apex predator. Long-term biosecurity requires robust epidemiological surveillance alongside structural policy shifts toward creating alternative, meta-population habitats.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, wildlife protection, and biodiversity management.
- **Prelims:** IUCN status of the Asiatic Lion (Endangered), Wildlife Protection Act schedules, geographical layout of Gir National Park, and zoonotic/epizootic diseases.

## 3. Geopolitics: India as a Strategic Anchor in Indo-Pacific

During the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth articulated American strategic intent, describing India as a critical anchor required to maintain the balance of power and counter any potential hegemony in the Indo-Pacific region.

### Key Highlights & Summary

- **India as a Strategic Anchor:** The US administration characterized a strong, self-interested India as essential to "holding the line" in South Asia and securing the broader Indo-Pacific architecture.
- **Balance of Power:** The overarching Western strategy emphasizes maintaining regional equilibrium where no singular state, specifically China, can impose unilateral hegemony or threaten neighborhood security.
- **Defense Co-production:** The bilateral trajectory highlights advanced military cooperation, explicitly flagging the co-production of Javelin anti-tank guided missiles to bolster India's domestic defense manufacturing.
- **Allied Defense Expenditure:** The US issued a clear call to its Asian allies to scale up their independent domestic defense spending to collectively mitigate regional security risks.





- **Calibrated Diplomacy:** Despite firm security posturing against Chinese military buildup, the US maintained a nuanced diplomatic stance, asserting that Washington does not actively seek direct confrontation with Beijing.

### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Hegemony:** The geopolitical dominance or leadership exercised by one nation-state over others in a specific region or globally.
- **Balance of Power:** A state of international stability where military capabilities are distributed such that no single nation is strong enough to dominate all others.
- **Defense Co-production:** Joint manufacturing arrangements between two nations involving technology transfer, local assembly, and supply chain integration.

### Constitutional & International Legal Framework

- **Article 51 (DPSP):** Instructs the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law.
- **UNCLOS (1982):** The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides the legal bedrock for upholding freedom of navigation and overflight across contested Indo-Pacific corridors.
- **Bilateral Defense Pacts:** Strategic interactions are governed by foundational agreements like LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA, which institutionalize military interoperability between India and the US.

### Additional Key Insights

The rhetoric underscores the "minilateral" defense network forming via the Quad (India, US, Japan, Australia). Concurrently, India's independent geopolitical posture is demonstrated by its expanding defense export footprint, evidenced by parallel strategic deals such as supplying BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to Vietnam to enhance ASEAN deterrence capability.

### Conclusion

The evolving Indo-US dynamic reflects a convergence of structural interests where India's rise is viewed not as a challenge, but as a stabilizing counterweight. For New Delhi, leveraging US technological co-production assists its strategic autonomy, allowing India to secure its maritime frontiers without entering a formal, binding military alliance system.

### 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.
- **Prelims:** Shangri-La Dialogue, foundational defense agreements (BECA, COMCASA), geographic choke points in the Indo-Pacific, and military export profiles like the BrahMos missile system.

## 4. Defence Exports: BrahMos Deal with Vietnam Confirmed

At the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh provided the first official confirmation that India has signed a deal with Vietnam for the supply of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, while a similar pact with Indonesia has entered its final stages.



## Key Highlights & Summary

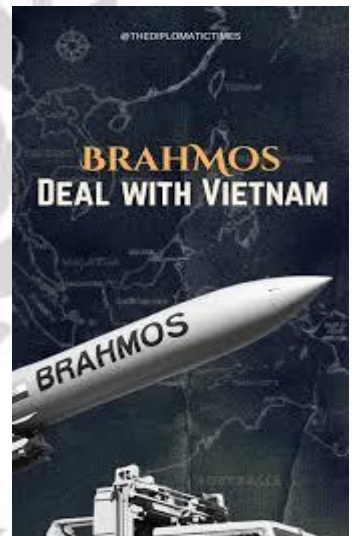
- **Vietnam Strategic Deal:** India officially acknowledged the conclusion of an export agreement to supply the advanced BrahMos missile system to Vietnam, augmenting Hanoi's maritime and coastal defense capabilities.
- **Expanding ASEAN Footprint:** Following the pioneering USD 375 million contract with the Philippines in 2022, the upcoming Indonesia pact cements India's role as a primary security provider in Southeast Asia.
- **Defense Industrial Shift:** Driven by systemic policy overhauls, India's defense sector is transitioning from an import-dependent structure into an export hub, with public sector undertakings accounting for 72% of domestic production alongside expanding private sector participation.
- **Supply Chain Resilience:** Global geopolitical uncertainties, maritime trade route disruptions, and localized conflicts highlight the critical necessity of shifting away from fragile, over-concentrated defense supply chains.
- **Trusted Partnerships:** Advanced technology transfers are strictly calibrated around deep bilateral trust, positioning ASEAN nations as "friendly foreign countries" vital for inclusive regional collective security.

## Definitions of Key Terms

- **Supersonic Cruise Missile:** A self-propelled, guided aerodynamic missile that travels at speeds faster than the speed of sound (Mach 1 to Mach 5) sustained throughout its flight path.
- **Defense Industrial Resilience:** The capacity of a nation's defense manufacturing ecosystem to maintain output, innovate, and resist supply chain disruptions during geopolitical shocks.

## Constitutional & International Legal Framework

- **Article 51 (DPSP):** Directs the State to promote international peace and security and maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
- **UNCLOS (1982):** The legal architecture governing maritime boundaries and freedom of navigation, heavily applicable to the overlapping territorial claims in the South China Sea.
- **Strategic Partnership Frameworks:** Guided by India's 'Act East Policy', which transitions traditional diplomatic engagement into substantive security, maritime, and defense production cooperation.



## Additional Key Insights

The export of the co-developed Indo-Russian BrahMos platform demonstrates India's balancing act in strategic autonomy. It positions New Delhi as a reliable alternative counterweight to security architectures in the Indo-Pacific without creating exclusive, polarizing military alliances.

## Conclusion

The formalization of the BrahMos export to Vietnam marks an evolutionary milestone for India's indigenous defense manufacturing sector. By equipping regional partners with credible deterrence platforms, India



strengthens collective maritime security while steadily transforming its domestic economy into a global defense engineering hub.

### 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 III:** Indigenization of technology and developing new technology; Security challenges and their management in border areas.

## 5. Judicial Enforcement: Supreme Court Intervention on Chambal Mining

The Supreme Court of India has sharply rebuked state governments over persistent executive apathy regarding widespread illegal sand mining within the inter-state National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, terming the administrative inaction a severe breakdown of the rule of law.

### Key Highlights & Summary

- **Judicial Indictment of States:** The apex court took suo motu cognizance of the crisis, severely slamming the Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh governments for demonstrating persistent inaction, casual enforcement, and a total lack of seriousness in checking armed sand mining mafias.
- **Ecological Degradation:** Despite an absolute ban enacted in 2006, organized mining syndicates have systematically extraction riverbed sand, disrupting the riverine ecosystem and directly endangering critically vulnerable wildlife including gharials, freshwater dolphins, and turtles.
- **Failure of Local Enforcement:** Frontline forest personnel are severely under-equipped to counter heavily armed syndicates, a structural vulnerability that led to the killing of multiple forest guards and law enforcement officers across Morena and Dholpur.
- **Controversial De-notification Attempts:** Both Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan attempted to de-notify large tracts of the sanctuary (207 hectares and 732 hectares respectively) to legally permit mining and urbanization, administrative moves that were subsequently stayed or struck down under judicial oversight.
- **The Structural Supply Gap:** National sand demand grows at 6-7% annually, creating a massive supply shortfall of at least 40% due to a lack of viable alternatives like manufactured sand, which inherently drives the highly lucrative illegal extraction along pristine river corridors.



### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Suo Motu Cognizance:** A legal procedure where a court takes up a case on its own motion, without any formal petition or complaint being filed by an external party.
- **De-notification:** The official administrative and legal process of stripping a geographically defined area of its protected wildlife sanctuary or national park status.



## Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Interpreted by courts to incorporate the right to a clean, healthy, and ecologically balanced environment as a fundamental component of the right to life.
- **Article 48A:** Instructs the state to continuously protect and improve the natural environment, safeguarding the nation's dense forests and diverse wildlife assets.
- **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957:** Empowers state governments to frame specific rules to prevent illegal mining, transportation, and storage of minor minerals like sand.

## Additional Key Insights

The Chambal River possesses the highest conservation value across the greater Gangetic basin because its historical badland topography isolated it from major urbanization. It serves as a vital dispersal corridor linking disconnected wildlife habitats across over a dozen protected zones, including Ranthambore, Kuno-Palpur, and Madhav National Parks.

## Conclusion

The crisis in Chambal highlights a systemic governance failure where economic pressure overrules environmental laws. True containment requires moving beyond reactionary judicial interventions toward equipping frontline field staff, conducting strict anti-corruption audits of state administrative machinery, and rapidly scaling up alternative building technologies to permanently depress the demand for riverbed sand.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies; Governance issues and institutional challenges in environmental management.
- **GS Paper III:** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation; Internal security challenges linked to organized crime and resource extraction mafias.
- **Prelims:** Geographical attributes of the Chambal River (tributary of Yamuna), National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary (tri-state status: MP, Rajasthan, UP), IUCN status of the Gharial (Critically Endangered), and definitions of minor minerals.

## Cultural Diplomacy: Buddha Relics and India's Soft Power

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated the international exposition "The Light and The Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One" in New Delhi, celebrating the historic repatriation of the sacred Piprahwa relics of Lord Buddha and showcasing India's expanding spiritual diplomacy across Asia.

## Key Highlights & Summary

- **Sacred Relic Repatriation:** The Piprahwa collection—including bone fragments, ash, and over 300 precious gemstones—was successfully brought back to India after 127 years in colonial-era and private possession, preventing a commercial auction by Sotheby's.
- **Public-Private Recovery Model:** To navigate legal and ethical complexities, the Ministry of Culture collaborated with the Godrej Group, which purchased the collection privately to return it to the state, establishing a new benchmark for heritage reclamation.



- **Strategic Historic Continuity:** The current exposition mirrors India's 1950 initiative when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru sent these relics to Ladakh to lift local morale following the 1947-48 Indo-Pak conflict.
- **Pan-Asian Spiritual Footprint:** Over decades, India has deployed relic expositions to consolidate ties with Buddhist-majority countries, holding critical state-level exhibitions in Sri Lanka, Mongolia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **Institutionalizing Soft Power:** This diplomacy is reinforced by structures like the Asian Buddhist Conference for Peace (ABCP), co-founded in 1969 by Ladakh's visionary leader Kushok Bakula Rinpoche to advocate for peace and disarmament during the Cold War.

### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Soft Power:** The ability of a country to persuade and influence international relations through cultural, ideological, and moral appeal rather than coercive military or economic force.
- **Reliquary:** A highly decorated container, casket, or stupa chamber specifically designed to enshrine sacred corporeal remains (relics) or objects associated with a spiritual figure.

### Constitutional & Policy Framework

- **Article 51 (DPSP):** Instructs the state to promote international peace, security, and foster honorable cultural and diplomatic relations between nations.
- **Article 49:** Mandates the state to protect monuments, places, and objects of artistic or historic interest declared to be of national importance.
- **"Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi" Policy:** The current governance paradigm balancing rapid infrastructure development with the assertive conservation and global projection of India's civilisational heritage.

### Additional Key Insights

The civilisational diplomacy utilizing the Piprahwa relics reinforces India's identity as the geographical and spiritual birthplace of Buddhism. By positioning itself as a benevolent custodian rather than a political hegemon, India uses shared heritage to build reliable people-to-people ties, directly countering competitive regional geopolitical alignments in South and Southeast Asia.

### Conclusion

The repatriation and exposition of the Piprahwa relics mark a transition from passive cultural preservation to active heritage statecraft. Utilizing spiritual linkages allows India to offer a non-coercive, ethics-based framework for regional cooperation, anchoring its foreign policy firmly in universal tenets of peace, dialogue, and shared histories.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Indian culture, salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times (Buddhist art and philosophy).
- **GS Paper II:** India and its neighborhood- relations; Bilateral, regional and global groupings involving India; Evolving nature of cultural diplomacy.

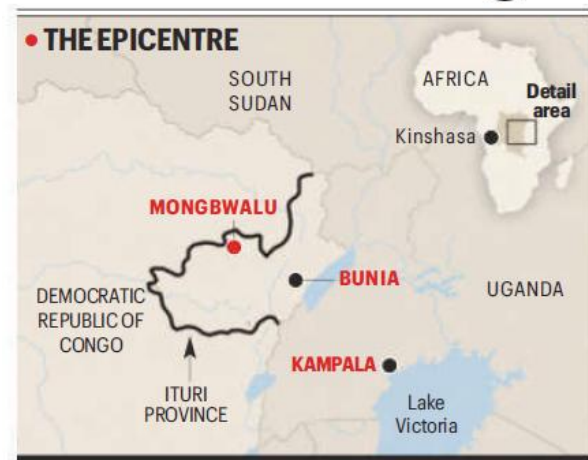


## 6. Global Health: Ebola Resurgence in the Democratic Republic of Congo

An aggressive Ebola outbreak has surfaced in Mongbwalu, a remote gold-mining town in the Ituri Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), ballooning rapidly into the country's third-largest recorded outbreak amid severely strained frontline medical defenses.

### Key Highlights & Summary

- **Outbreak Epicentre:** The virus emerged on May 15 in Mongbwalu, a dense gold-mining hub of roughly 150,000 residents, which serves as an operational vector due to constant migrant and refugee movements.
- **Frontline Systemic Failure:** Rural intensive care wards are completely overwhelmed, facing critical deficits in basic personal protective equipment (PPE), diagnostics, isolation tents, and sanitized water.
- **High Nosocomial Transmission:** The highly contagious nature of the virus has led to a severe infection rate among frontline medical workers, including the deaths of seven hospital staff members within the initial weeks.
- **Delayed Institutional Response:** Local administration faced heavy criticism from medical personnel for a six-week diagnostic delay, allowing the virus to spread unchecked before mobilizing international aid.
- **Complex Security Environment:** Humanitarian interventions by groups like Doctors Without Borders are complicated by surrounding rebel conflicts, driving massive populations in and out of the mining zone.



### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Epicentre:** The specific localized area or focal point where an infectious disease outbreak begins and from which it radiates outward.
- **Nosocomial Transmission:** The spread of an infectious disease or pathogen originating or taking place within a hospital or clinical facility.
- **Zoonotic Disease:** An infectious illness that is transmitted naturally between vertebrate animals and humans.

### Constitutional & International Legal Framework

- **Article 21 (Indian Context):** The Supreme Court of India expands the Right to Life to incorporate health security, matching global humanitarian standards during international health emergencies.
- **International Health Regulations (IHR 2005):** A legally binding instrument of the World Health Organization (WHO) requiring member states to detect, assess, and report public health events of international concern.
- **Article 12 (ICESCR):** The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights recognizes the fundamental right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.



## Additional Key Insights

The Mongbwalu crisis illustrates the intersection of epidemiology, resource extraction economics, and state fragility. Informal, unregulated mining ecosystems present unique public health challenges, as transient populations, lack of civil infrastructure, and porous borders accelerate the transmission velocity of highly lethal pathogens across international corridors.

## Conclusion

The rapid escalation of Ebola in the DRC highlights that global health security is entirely dependent on localized surveillance capabilities. Containing highly contagious zoonotic viral threats requires moving past late-stage emergency aid toward establishing permanent clinical infrastructure, secure supply chains for medical countermeasures, and robust epidemiological monitoring within high-risk ecological zones.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health; Important International institutions, agencies and their structure.
- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life (awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-technology, Bio-technology).

## 7. Macroeconomics: Inflation Vulnerabilities and Growth Headwinds

The Ministry of Finance's latest Monthly Economic Review warns that India's near-term economic growth faces consumption headwinds and structural risks due to geopolitical tensions in West Asia, domestic fuel price shocks, and a downgraded monsoon forecast.

### Key Highlights & Summary

- **Consumption Demand Headwinds:** Global economic headwinds are transitioning into the domestic sector, threatening aggregate consumer demand and flagging the need for agile monetary and fiscal frameworks.
- **Core Sector Deceleration:** Growth across India's eight core industries dropped sharply to 1.2% in March and 1.7% in April, reflecting a distinct moderation in primary industrial output.
- **Widening Inflation Wedge:** A severe divergence exists between retail inflation (3.48%) and wholesale inflation (8.3%), indicating strong upstream cost pressures that will inevitably pass through to consumers.
- **Monsoon and Food Security:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) downgraded its monsoon forecast to 90% of the Long Period Average (LPA), the lowest in 20 years, threatening rural demand via potential food inflation.
- **External Currency Pressures:** Elevated global oil prices caused by regional conflicts triggered a massive capital flight of USD 24.2 billion from Indian markets, pushing the Indian Rupee to multiple historic lows.

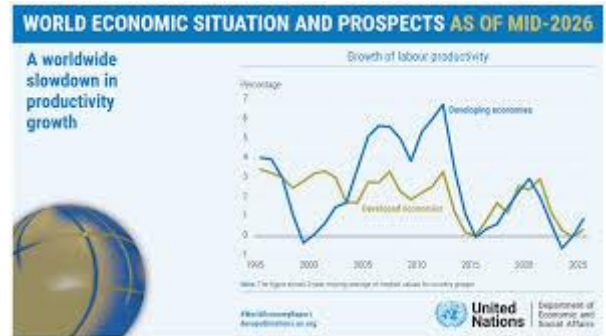
### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Long Period Average (LPA):** The benchmark calculation representing the average rainfall received over a specific region during a continuous 50-year interval.
- **Wholesale Price Index (WPI) vs. Consumer Price Index (CPI) Wedge:** The numeric gap between manufacturing-level raw material costs (WPI) and consumer market prices (CPI).



## Constitutional & Statutory Provisions

- **Article 292:** Dictates the executive boundaries regarding the borrowing powers of the Central Government to bridge fiscal deficits during macroeconomic shocks.
- **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934 (Section 45ZB):** Establishes the statutory framework for the six-member Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) mandated to maintain domestic price stability while keeping growth goals.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003:** Sets institutional limits for the government to ensure inter-generational equity in fiscal management.



## Additional Key Insights

The report highlights a complex policy trap. While the Reserve Bank of India lowered the policy repo rate by 125 basis points to 5.25% to support growth, the sudden return of imported inflation via crude oil hikes might force the MPC to reverse stance and raise interest rates by 25-50 basis points to anchor capital flows and protect exchange rates.

## Conclusion

India's economic outlook relies on striking a balance between growth revival and inflation containment. Overcoming these headwinds requires targeted supply-side interventions in the agricultural sector, accelerating alternative energy integration to reduce import dependencies, and maintaining a cautious, data-driven monetary policy stance.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment; Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.
- **Prelims:** Components of the Core Sector, differences between CPI and WPI methodologies, mechanics of the Monetary Policy Committee, and definition of Long Period Average.

## 8. Environment & Economy: ESG Transition and Industry Compliance Risks

Global carbon regulations and domestic sustainability frameworks are rapidly transforming Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) practices from voluntary disclosures into mandatory business priorities, exposing significant compliance gaps across Indian industry.

## Key Highlights & Summary

- **Mandatory Compliance Shift:** ESG practices are transitioning from superficial corporate social responsibility exercises into binding regulatory hurdles, heavily influencing global market competitiveness.
- **Global Regulatory Headwinds:** Strict international policies, notably the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), impose direct economic penalties on carbon-intensive exports from developing nations.



- **Domestic Regulatory Mandates:** India is strengthening its internal architecture via the Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) norms and the domestic Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS).
- **Deficit in Carbon Readiness:** An analysis reveals that 72% of Indian companies remain at an early stage of carbon readiness, struggling with data collection and structured emissions tracking.
- **Supply Chain Vulnerability:** Indian firms face severe implementation bottlenecks within raw material procurement and vendor ecosystems, where verifying carbon data credibility remains highly complex.

### Definitions of Key Terms

- **ESG Framework:** A structured evaluation system used to measure a corporate entity's performance regarding environmental impact, social relationships, and internal governance standards.
- **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM):** A tariff system enacted by the EU to impose carbon-equivalent taxes on imported goods like steel, cement, and electricity from countries with less stringent climate laws.

### Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Instructs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard public natural resources.
- **Article 51A(g):** Establishes a fundamental duty for every citizen and corporation to protect and improve the natural environment.
- **Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022:** Provides the necessary statutory framework for setting up India's domestic Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS).



### Additional Key Insights

The tightening of ESG criteria threatens India's primary industrial exporters. As Western markets implement border adjustments, non-compliant firms face export containment. Resolving this requires shifting from simple internal accounting to comprehensive supply-chain audits, ensuring small and medium enterprises (SMEs) serving as vendors are not cut out from global trade networks due to inadequate compliance data.

### Conclusion

The transition toward structured ESG compliance highlights that environmental metrics are now tied to trade resilience. For Indian industries to sustain global market access, they must accelerate green technology integration, upgrade data tracking infrastructure, and view carbon efficiency as a core competitive parameter rather than a secondary corporate box-ticking exercise.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc; Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.
- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's interests and trade profiles.



- **Prelims:** Features of CBAM, SEBI's BRSR framework, carbon credit mechanics, and provisions of the Energy Conservation Act.

## 9. Defence & Security: Inaugural Multilateral Exercise PRAGATI 2026

The maiden edition of the multilateral military exercise, "PRAGATI 2026," successfully concluded at the Joint Training Node in Umroi, Meghalaya, marking a significant consolidation of India's defense diplomacy in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

### Key Highlights & Summary

- **Inaugural Multilateral Framework:** PRAGATI—Partnership of Regional Armies for Growth and Transformation in the Indian Ocean Region—brought together over 400 soldiers from 13 regional nations for its inaugural joint training edition.
- **Geographic Participation:** The two-week exercise involved contingents from key friendly foreign nations, including Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and India.
- **Strategic Counter-Insurgency Focus:** Operational training was meticulously optimized for counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism interventions within complex semi-mountainous and jungle terrains.
- **Integration of Niche Technologies:** High-level tactical discussions were centered on adapting techniques, tactics, and procedures (TTPs) to accommodate rapid technological advancements and electronic warfare on the modern battlefield.
- **Domestic Defense Exhibition:** Facilitated by the Army Design Bureau and FICCI, the event showcased a defense equipment exhibition to display cutting-edge indigenous platforms under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative to prospective regional buyers.



### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Interoperability:** The capacity of distinct military units or diverse international armed forces to operate in synergy, utilizing shared communication protocols, compatible equipment, and combined command structures.
- **Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures (TTPs):** The standardized military operational definitions describing the specific methods, execution frameworks, and detailed formatting protocols used to fulfill combat objectives.

### Constitutional & Strategic Framework

- **Article 51 (DPSP):** Instructs the Indian State to actively promote international peace, foster collective security, and sustain just relations between sovereign states.
- **SAGAR Doctrine:** Security and Growth for All in the Region serves as India's overarching maritime doctrine to position itself as a net security provider and trusted developmental partner across the IOR.
- **Act East Policy:** The overarching diplomatic framework aimed at expanding institutional economic, strategic, and defense cooperation networks with ASEAN and broader Asia-Pacific neighbors.



### Additional Key Insights

The inclusion of a significant female contingent, including roughly 20 women officers executing specialized heliborne and tactical drills, highlights the steady gender mainstreaming within regional defense architectures. Furthermore, using Umroi's advanced Joint Training Node underscores India's growing infrastructure capability to host complex, large-scale multilateral exercises.

### Conclusion

Exercise PRAGATI 2026 establishes India's expanding role as a stabilizing anchor within the Indian Ocean Region. By focusing on non-coercive capacity building, sharing counter-insurgency expertise, and showcasing indigenous defense technologies, New Delhi offers a collaborative security alternative that fosters regional peace without relying on rigid, exclusive military alliances.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; India and its neighborhood relations.
- **GS Paper III:** Security challenges and their management in border areas; Linkages of organized crime with terrorism; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating internal security challenges.

## 10. Social Sector: Gender Indicators and Social Transitions in NFHS-6

The National Family Health Survey (NFHS-6) for 2023-24 presents a multi-dimensional transition for Indian women, showcasing significant structural advancements in educational attainment and digital inclusion alongside deeply entrenched socio-cultural challenges.

### Key Highlights & Summary

- **Educational and Digital Upskilling:** School attendance among women rose to 73.7%, with those completing over 10 years of education increasing from 41% to 46.4%. Notably, female internet penetration nearly doubled, surging from 33.2% to 64.3%.
- **Persistent Economic and Marriage Gaps:** Asset ownership remains structurally low, with only 18.8% of women owning a house or land independently or jointly. Furthermore, 20.1% of women aged 20-24 were still married before the legal age of 18.
- **Asymmetric Reproductive Burden:** Female sterilization continues to dominate India's contraceptive landscape at 36.5%, highlighting an uneven distribution of family planning responsibilities.
- **Decline in Domestic Violence:** Ever-married women experiencing spousal physical, sexual, or emotional violence dropped nationally from 29.2% to 22.3%. However, states like Bihar (36.1%) and Kerala (rising from 9.8% to 17.7%) bucked the positive trend.
- **Reduction in Substance Abuse:** Adult tobacco usage fell to 34.6% for men and 7.2% for women, while alcohol consumption decreased to 18.2% for men, though prevalence remains concentrated within socio-economically vulnerable rural groups.

### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Digital Access Rate:** The percentage of a defined demographic group who have used the internet from any location or device within a specified timeframe.



- **Spousal Violence:** Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse inflicted by a current or former marriage partner, measured across the reproductive age bracket of 18-49 years.

### Constitutional & Statutory Provisions

- **Article 15(3):** Empowers the State to make special provisions, including affirmative action policies, for the advancement of women and children.
- **Article 21A:** Guarantees the fundamental right to free and compulsory education for children aged 6 to 14 years.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006:** A statutory framework defining legal marital age thresholds and providing mechanisms to declare underage marriages void.



### Additional Key Insights

The data highlights a clear developmental paradox where digital and academic empowerment has outpaced economic asset ownership and structural domestic autonomy. The sharp rise in reported spousal violence in a high-literacy state like Kerala highlights complex reporting dynamics, where greater awareness and lower social stigma often drive higher case registration.

### Conclusion

NFHS-6 proves that legislative mandates alone cannot overwrite entrenched patriarchal structures. Advancing gender parity requires moving beyond basic literacy metrics toward targeted interventions that secure female property rights, diversify family planning methods, and address the socioeconomic drivers of early marriage.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population; Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education, Human Resources.
- **GS Paper I:** Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues.
- **Prelims:** Organizational mandate of the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), core metrics tracked under NFHS cycles, and statutory age limits for marriage.

## 11. Biodiversity: New Cascade Frog Species Discovered in Nagaland

A scientific expedition by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) has discovered a new cascade-dwelling frog species, named *Amolops kamal* (Nagaland cascade frog), within the pristine hill-stream habitats of Nagaland's Kiphire district.

### Key Highlights & Summary

- **Taxonomic Discovery:** Scientists identified *Amolops kamal* near Singrep village, establishing it as a distinct evolutionary lineage within the pre-existing *Amolops indoburmanensis* species complex.
- **Geographic Matrix:** The species was recorded in high-altitude, rugged hill-stream ecosystems bordering Myanmar, a zone highlighting high regional endemism.



- **Genomic Classification:** Researchers utilized integrative taxonomy and molecular phylogenetic studies to delineate the species, proving that morphologically identical frogs possess unique genetic boundaries.
- **Genus Divergence:** The Asian cascade-dwelling frog genus *Amolops* currently comprises 90 recognized species globally, with India harboring 20 distinct variations.
- **Structural Groupings:** In India, these species are distributed across three morphological clusters: *Amolops marmoratus* (the most diverse with eight species), *Amolops monticola*, and *Amolops viridimaculatus*.

### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Cryptic Species Complex:** A group of individual organisms that are morphologically indistinguishable from one another but possess distinct genetic variations preventing interbreeding.
- **Integrative Taxonomy:** A modern scientific approach that combines traditional morphology with molecular genetics, ecology, and evolutionary biology to define species boundaries.
- **Cascade-Dwelling:** Organisms specifically adapted to survive in micro-habitats characterized by fast-flowing mountain streams, waterfalls, and high-velocity rocky torrents.



### Constitutional & Statutory Framework

- **Article 48A (DPSP):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002:** Regulates access to biological resources to ensure equitable sharing of benefits arising out of their use, matching India's global mandates under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Provides the overarching legal mechanism to designate critical habitats and protect endangered amphibian species from commercial exploitation.

### Additional Key Insights

The identification of *Amolops kamal* reveals that *Amolops indoburmanensis*, previously assumed to be a single widespread species, is actually a collection of distinct evolutionary lineages. This underscores the vulnerability of the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot, where unmapped micro-endemic species face acute risks from localized habitat degradation and climate-induced stream drying.

### Conclusion

The discovery of the Nagaland cascade frog demonstrates that the rugged, isolated riverine corridors of Northeast India remain a reservoir of undocumented biodiversity. Safeguarding these cryptic lineages requires a policy shift from broad macro-habitat protection toward targeted conservation of micro-ecosystems like hill streams, supported by permanent molecular and field-level environmental monitoring.

### UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, biodiversity hotspots, and taxonomy-driven environmental impact assessments.



- **Prelims:** Mandate of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI), geography of Kiphire district and the Indo-Burma border, characteristics of the genus *Amolops*, and definitions of molecular phylogenetics.

## 12. Marine Biology: Tissue Longevity and Immortality in Sea Cucumbers

A groundbreaking biological study has revealed that tissues harvested from sea cucumbers can survive, maintain cellular functions, and grow independently in natural seawater for over three years without any external artificial nutrient supplements.

### Key Highlights & Summary

- **Exceptional Autonomous Survival:** Isolated body parts of the sea cucumber demonstrated long-term viability, surviving for more than three years completely detached from the host organism.
- **Nutrient Absorption Mechanics:** The independent tissue samples maintained basic metabolic functions by directly absorbing organic matter and dissolved nutrients available within natural seawater.
- **Autonomous Immune Defense:** The surviving tissues deployed localized immune cells to actively combat and neutralize pathogen infections without a central nervous or circulatory system.
- **Challenge to Biological Decay:** This phenomenon displays a form of localized natural immortality, fundamentally challenging current scientific assumptions regarding standard biological decay and cellular aging.
- **Ethical Research Alternative:** The long-lived tissue model offers a highly sustainable, non-destructive, and ethical laboratory framework for studying cellular regeneration and wound healing mechanics.

### Definitions of Key Terms

- **Natural Immortality:** The biological capacity of specific cells or isolated tissues to continuously escape senescence, aging, or cellular death under favorable environmental conditions.
- **Autonomous Metabolism:** The ability of individual tissues or cellular structures to generate energy and process nutrients independently of an intact organic host system.

### Constitutional & Statutory Framework

- **Article 51A(h):** Mandates a fundamental duty for every citizen to develop scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform.
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Sea cucumbers are protected under Schedule I of this Act, granting them the highest level of legal protection against harvesting, trafficking, and commercial exploitation.
- **Biological Diversity Act, 2002:** Regulates access to indigenous biological resources to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic and biochemical research.

### Additional Key Insights

Sea cucumbers play a critical ecological role as marine detritivores, acting as ocean vacuums that process organic matter and recycle nutrients within benthic ecosystems. However, their unique regenerative properties have made them prime targets for illegal wildlife trafficking networks across the Palk Bay and Gulf of Mannar, threatening marine biodiversity and reef health.

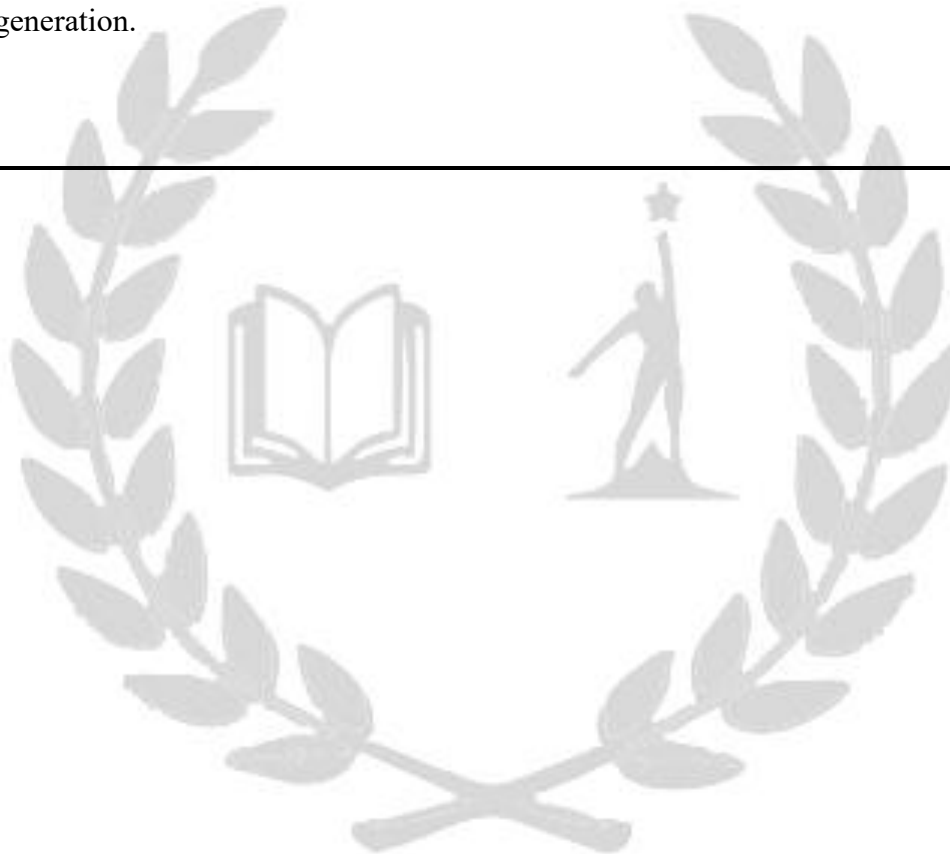


## Conclusion

The discovery of prolonged independent tissue survival in sea cucumbers opens new frontiers in regenerative medicine, tissue engineering, and aging research. From a policy perspective, balancing the scientific exploration of these unique biochemical properties with rigid enforcement against marine poaching remains vital to preserving India's sensitive coastal ecosystems.

## UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology: Developments and their applications in everyday life; Conservation, environmental pollution, and degradation.
- **Prelims:** Taxonomy and ecological role of Sea Cucumbers (Echinoderms), Wildlife Protection Act schedules, marine biosphere reserves (Gulf of Mannar), and concepts of cellular senescence and tissue regeneration.



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