



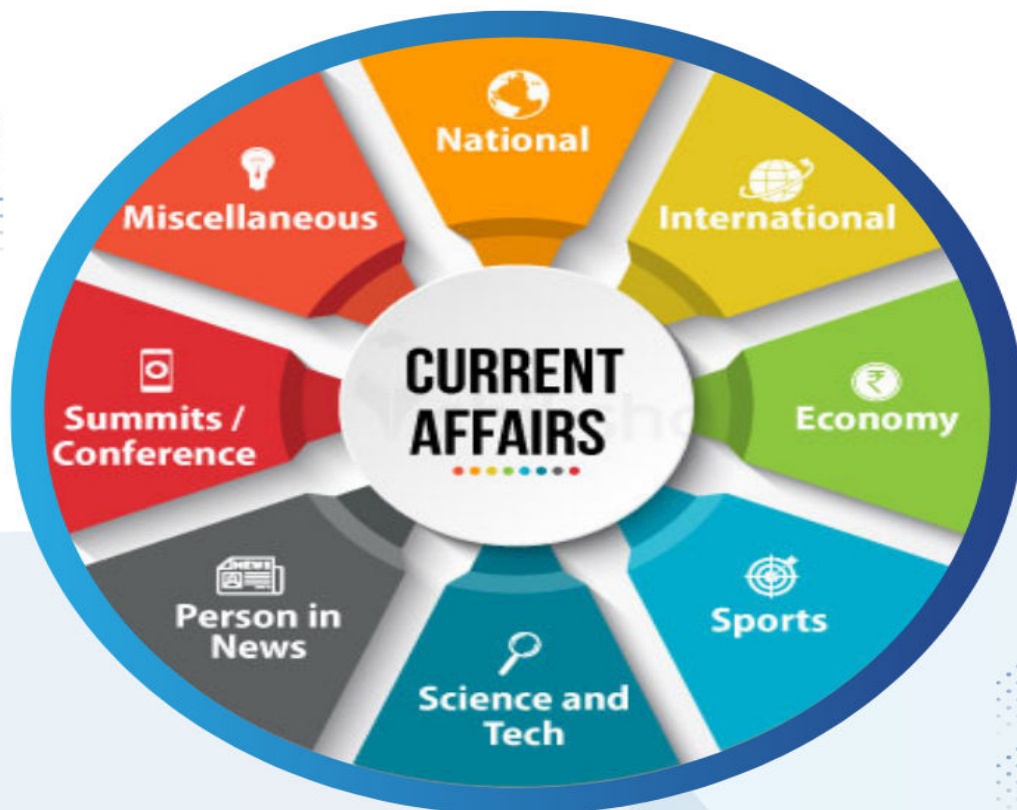
“ We help you reach for the star ”

VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 05/06/2026 (FRIDAY)



9972258970 & 9740702455

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



Table of Contents

1. Great Nicobar Project: Evolving Strategic Status and Transparency Concerns	2
2. Transformation of Northeast India: 73rd NEC Plenary Session	3
3. Military Modernization: Indian Army's Accelerated Drone Integration	4
4. Geopolitical Resilience: Hailing India-Russia Strategic Partnership	5
5. 29th National Awards for e-Governance: Driving Digital Transformation	5
6. Strategic Fiscal and Diplomatic Maneuvers for Macroeconomic Stability	6
7. Shift in India's Sugar Export Policy: From Restricted to Prohibited	8
8. Implementation of Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code: First Nikah Halala Case	10
9. Transitioning from Sick-Care to Preventive Health Stewardship in India	11
10. India's External Sector Vulnerabilities: Capital Outflows and Currency Strain	13
11. Analysis of India's Labour Market: Insights from PLFS 2025	14
12. Vande Mataram: Historical Context and the Debate on Multicultural Nationalism	16



VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. Great Nicobar Project: Evolving Strategic Status and Transparency Concerns

- **Context & Institutional Divergence:** Official records from March 2026 reveal that the Public Investment Board (PIB) under the Finance Ministry had initially termed the proposed ₹81,000 crore International Container Transshipment Port (ICTP) at Galathea Bay as lacking "strategic objectives" in August 2024. However, just over a year later, the Ministry of Defence formally notified the ICTP as a "strategic project."
- **The Project Blueprint:** The mega Great Nicobar Project is an integrated development plan comprising four core components: the ICTP at Galathea Bay, a greenfield international airport, a township, a gas-based power plant, and a dedicated tourism zone aimed at leveraging the island's proximity to the Malacca Strait.
- **Information Asymmetry & Security Clauses:** The Union government has cited the "strategic and national security" nature of the project since 2022 to withhold public access to the High-Powered Committee (HPC) report regarding its cumulative environmental impacts. Right to Information (RTI) requests seeking details on environmental clearances have similarly been denied using these security exemptions.
- **Appraisal Disclosures:** The PIB's initial critical observations surfaced during recent March 2026 meetings of the Public-Private Partnership Appraisal Committee (PPPAC), which is the apex body responsible for vetting large-scale infrastructure proposals valued at ₹500 crore and above that involve private sector participation.
- **Constitutional & Legal Framework:** The denial of project data intersects with **Section 8(1)(a)** of the **Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005**, which exempts disclosures affecting the sovereignty, integrity, and security of India. Environmental compliance is governed by the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986** and the **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**, given the island's fragile ecological status as a Biosphere Reserve.
- **Key Definitions:**
 - * *Transshipment Port:* A maritime hub where cargo or containers are unloaded from one vessel and loaded onto another to be forwarded to their final destination, optimizing global shipping routes.
 - *Public Investment Board (PIB):* A premier body under the Ministry of Finance tasked with evaluating the economic viability, financial feasibility, and structural soundness of public investment proposals before Cabinet approval.
- **UPSC Relevance: GS Paper II & III** (Infrastructure, Environmental Impact Assessment, Statutory Exemptions vs Accountability, and Internal Security). The topic is vital for analyzing the structural friction between national security imperatives, economic viability, and ecological conservation in island development.

The Nicobar question

The "strategic" nature of the project has been the Centre's excuse for not making public the contents of a report by a High Powered Committee on the environmental impact of the project

The Public Investment Board, a Finance Ministry body, termed the port-component of the Nicobar project as "lacking strategic objectives" in August 2024

A year later, the Ministry of Defence labels it as a "strategic project"



In the last year or so, the ₹81,000-crore project is being cast in a maritime security lens, centred around the threat from China

Conclusion: The shifting classification of the Galathea Bay port from an economically assessed project to a defense-notified strategic asset underscores the complex security-development calculus in the Indian Ocean Region. While safeguarding maritime choke points is an undeniable sovereign priority, maintaining an optimal balance through targeted environmental disclosures is essential to ensure that strategic growth does not result in irreversible ecological degradation.



2. Transformation of Northeast India: 73rd NEC Plenary Session

- **Plenary Imperatives & Strategic Shift:** The Union Home Minister chaired the 73rd plenary session of the North Eastern Council (NEC) in Shillong, Meghalaya. Highlighting the containment of historical secessionist insurgencies, the Centre urged Chief Ministers of the eight northeastern states to pivot their administrative machinery from law-and-order management toward safeguarding citizen rights and expanding localized economic opportunities.
- **The Five Strategic Development Missions:** The Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER) outlined five key technology-driven missions: high-resolution village resource mapping; geospatial monitoring of wetlands, forests, and rivers; support for space-tech startups; the "NERShield" framework for disaster resilience and early warning systems; and green wealth/natural capital accounting.
- **Technological Infrastructure & Niche Economics:** State governments were directed to build foundational public infrastructure for Artificial Intelligence (AI), machine learning, and blockchain to empower the youth. Concurrently, the states were instructed to commercially exploit the region's unique comparative advantages in health tourism, foreign cross-border trade, and aromatic oil-yielding agarwood plantations.
- **Bilateral Security & Immigration Demands:** State leadership scheduled a joint review of India-Bangladesh border security in Tripura. Amid these developments, Meghalaya requested a tightening of mechanisms against illegal immigration, proposing the enforcement of the Inner Line Permit (ILP) system and the statutory implementation of the Meghalaya Residents Safety and Security Act.
- **Constitutional & Legal Framework:** The NEC is a statutory advisory body established under the **North Eastern Council Act, 1971**, representing a unique institutional model of cooperative federalism. Border regulation and immigration fall under the Union List of the **Seventh Schedule**. Cultural demands from the session include the unresolved proposal to induct the Khasi and Garo languages into the **Eighth Schedule** of the Constitution.
- **Key Definitions:** * *Inner Line Permit (ILP):* A statutory travel document issued under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, which regulates the entry and duration of stay of non-natives in protected frontier states to safeguard indigenous tribal demographics.
 - *Natural Capital Accounting:* An economic framework that quantifies and values a region's environmental assets, ecosystem services, and biodiversity, integrating ecological health directly into national income accounting and GDP metrics.
- **UPSC Relevance: GS Paper II & III** (Statutory Bodies, Federal Structures, Internal Security, Border Management, Cyber Infrastructure, and Growth Models). It highlights the security-development nexus, transitioning from counter-insurgency to economic mainstreaming, and the integration of advanced technology into frontier governance.

Conclusion: The 73rd NEC Plenary marks a paradigm shift in frontier governance, moving the Northeast away from an isolationist security prism toward an integrated techno-economic hub. While the creation of advanced digital infrastructure and green accounting systems aligns with the "North East Vision Plan 2047," addressing local geopolitical frictions such as illegal immigration and cultural language demands remains vital to preserving the fragile demographic stability of this strategically sensitive border zone.



3. Military Modernization: Indian Army's Accelerated Drone Integration

- **Strategic Shift in Warfare:** The Indian Army has significantly accelerated the procurement and structural absorption of Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), loitering munitions, and counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems (C-UAS). Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi emphasized that the core objective is transitioning from mere equipment procurement to fundamentally reforming military training, tactical doctrines, and battlefield operations.
- **Institutional Architecture & Command Grids:** To manage complex, drone-dense battlefields, the Army is establishing a Unified Control Centre (UCC) at the division level. At tactical tiers, "Ashni" drone platoons are being integrated into infantry battalions to provide organic, real-time aerial awareness, decentralized target acquisition, and localized reach, encapsulated as the "Eagle on the Arm" concept.
- **Lessons from Contemporary Conflicts:** Drawing insights from ongoing global multi-domain battlefields and domestic operations like Operation Sindoor, the military has categorized drones not just as reconnaissance platforms but as battlefield consumables. This necessitates compressed sensor-to-shooter decision cycles, rapid domestic research and development, and flexible deployment postures tailored for high-intensity contingencies.
- **Tri-Services Synergy & Functional Restructuring:** The technological overhaul is integrated with larger higher defense reforms, including the creation of specialized Shaktibaan Regiments and Divyastra Batteries within the Regiment of Artillery. This restructuring links unmanned assets directly with air defense, intelligence, aviation, and electronic warfare grids to optimize force multiplication.
- **Constitutional & Legal Framework:** Defense and national security are core sovereign functions listed under Sl. No. 1, List I (Union List) of the **Seventh Schedule** under **Article 246**. Executive control of the armed forces is rooted in **Article 53(2)**, managed through the Ministry of Defence. Procurement processes are legally bound by the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP), prioritizing indigenization.
- **Key Definitions:**
 - * *Sensor-to-Shooter Cycle:* The operational timeline required to detect a military target via reconnaissance assets (sensors) and relay that actionable intelligence to firing units (shooters) for precision engagement.
 - *Loitering Munition:* An advanced category of aerial weapons, often called kamikaze drones, designed to hover over a designated battlefield asset area, locate targets through real-time sensors, and attack by crashing into them.
- **UPSC Relevance: GS Paper III** (Security Challenges & Their Management in Border Areas, Indigenization of Technology, and Various Security Forces & Agencies and Their Command Structure). This update is crucial for evaluating asymmetric warfare, military theaterisation, and technology-driven defense reforms.



Conclusion: The Indian Army's paradigm shift from a procurement-centric model to a doctrine-based absorption of autonomous systems addresses the changing character of transparent, modern warfare. Establishing specialized command systems like Unified Control Centres will eliminate tactical deconfliction bottlenecks. To secure long-term military self-reliance, this tactical integration must remain continuously synced with the domestic defense industry and emerging human resource reforms.



4. Geopolitical Resilience: Hailing India-Russia Strategic Partnership

- **Context & Partnership Endorsement:** During an interaction at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, Russian President Vladimir Putin strongly reaffirmed Moscow's time-tested strategic partnership with New Delhi. He asserted that India is a highly "reliable partner," characterizing Western diplomatic and economic pressures aimed at scaling back India-Russia bilateral cooperation as futile and counterproductive to global stability.
- **Strategic Autonomy & Independent Policy:** Moscow explicitly lauded India's multi-vector, independent foreign policy. Addressing concerns regarding India's growing defense and technology alignment with Washington through platforms like the Quad, Russia noted that this engagement creates no structural friction, acknowledging New Delhi's right to pursue relations based on its sovereign national interests.
- **Bilateral Trade & Economic Velocity:** Highlighting India as one of the fastest-growing major global economies, Russia expressed immense confidence in the upward trajectory of bilateral trade. Driven heavily by energy imports, engineering goods, and pharmaceutical cooperation, the bilateral trade volume is explicitly projected to hit the milestone of 100 billion US dollars in the coming years.
- **De-Westernization of Global Choke Points:** The briefing criticized the politicization of international economic architectures by Western nations. Both nations are actively seeking to bypass unilateral sanctions by optimizing alternative geoeconomic networks, including local-currency trade settlements (Rupee-Ruble mechanism) and developing robust transport corridors.
- **Constitutional & Legal Framework:** In India, foreign policy, treaties, and international relations fall strictly under the jurisdiction of the Union government, guided by Sl. No. 10 to 14, List I (Union List) of the **Seventh Schedule** under **Article 246**. This sovereign engagement is philosophically reinforced by **Article 51** of the Directive Principles of State Policy, which mandates the state to promote international peace and security.
- **Key Definitions:** * *Strategic Autonomy:* A nation's capacity to pursue its national interests and execute an independent foreign policy without being structurally constrained or dictated to by alliances with other powerful states.
 - *Structural Friction:* The systemic policy conflict or geopolitical tension that arises when a state's deepening alliance with one global power directly compromises its historic strategic commitments to a rival power.
- **UPSC Relevance: GS Paper II** (Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests). The topic provides vital analytical substance on the resilience of India's strategic autonomy, the dynamics of a multipolar world order, and the geopolitical management of complex major-power rivalries.

Conclusion: Russia's open endorsement of New Delhi's independent external stance underlines the success of India's pragmatic diplomacy. By refusing to capitulate to unilateral Western sanctions while expanding security cooperation with the West, India has effectively institutionalized its strategic autonomy. Moving forward, the critical challenge for New Delhi will lie in resolving payment bottlenecks and diversifying trade beyond primary hydrocarbons to sustain this vital 100 billion dollar economic partnership.

5. 29th National Awards for e-Governance: Driving Digital Transformation

- **Context & Core Theme:** The Union Government announced 17 digital projects as winners of the 29th National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) 2026. Jointly managed by the Department of



Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) and the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the 2026 conference in Jaipur, field-focused on the central theme: "*Viksit Bharat 2047: AI-Enabled, Data-Driven and Secure Digital Governance.*"

- **Core Institutional Winners:** The selection includes 10 Gold, 6 Silver, and 1 Jury Award across seven distinct strategic categories. Key central flagship winners include the Agriculture Ministry's "Agri Stack" platform for unified farmer databases, the Consumer Affairs Ministry's "e-Jagriti" portal for expedited dispute redressal, and the Health Ministry's AI-enabled clinical decision support infrastructure embedded in the eSanjeevani telemedicine framework.
- **Grassroots and State Milestones:** The awards highlighted a profound structural focus on widening service delivery pipelines at the village tier. Under the dedicated Gram Panchayat category, the Kadepur Gram Panchayat (Maharashtra) clinched the Gold Award, while the Bijoy Nagar Gram Panchayat (Tripura) secured the Silver Award. The Prayagraj Mela Authority also won acclaim for the integrated digital management of the Mahakumbh 2025.
- **Financial Incentives for Welfare:** To facilitate scalability and bridge localized implementation resource gaps, the statutory prize package consists of a commemorative trophy, a formal certificate, and direct financial incentives. Gold awardees receive an allocation of ₹10 lakh, while Silver awardees are granted ₹5 lakh, earmarked explicitly for public welfare expansion or project replication.
- **Constitutional & Legal Framework:** Digital administration derives its constitutional mandate from List I and List II of the **Seventh Schedule** under **Article 246**, regulating data networks and local administrations. Statutory backing is derived from the **Information Technology Act, 2000** and the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023. This model furthers the **Article 40** Directive Principle by digitally empowering village panchayats as self-governing units.
- **Key Definitions:** * *Agri Stack:* A state-backed federated digital architecture that provides farmers with unique digital identities, seamlessly linking land records, cropping metrics, and customized financial services.
 - *e-Governance:* The systemic application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to streamline public service delivery, maximize state transparency, eliminate middleman leakages, and enforce strict administrative accountability.
- **UPSC Relevance: GS Paper II & III** (Important Aspects of Governance, Transparency and Accountability, E-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; and Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions). This updates standard answer frameworks regarding the evolution of Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) and data-driven grassroots public administration.

Conclusion: The NAeG 2026 winners represent India's transition toward integrated, predictive governance systems. By shifting away from isolated departmental databases to unified frameworks like Agri Stack and AI-driven eSanjeevani, the administration is building a robust Digital Public Infrastructure. To secure the long-term vision of Viksit Bharat 2047, the state must address underlying structural challenges, including rural digital illiteracy, regional connectivity gaps, and data security vectors.

6. Strategic Fiscal and Diplomatic Maneuvers for Macroeconomic Stability

- **Revision of Withholding Tax (WHT):** The Government and the RBI are contemplating a significant reduction or total elimination of the 20% withholding tax on interest income from government bonds for non-residents. This move aims to reverse the "foreign capital strike" and stabilize the capital account following the depletion of forex reserves by \$38 billion in early 2026.



- **Curbing Gold Imports via Advance Authorisation (AA):** To prevent the drainage of foreign exchange, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has capped duty-free gold imports under the AA Scheme at 100 kg. This follow-up to the recent customs duty hike is designed to plug price arbitrage loopholes and ensure that duty-free imports are strictly used for genuine re-export purposes.
- **Maritime Diplomacy and Energy Security:** In high-level BRICS meetings, India has underscored that "safe and unimpeded maritime flows" through the Strait of Hormuz and the Red Sea are non-negotiable for global economic health. Given the West Asia conflict, India is engaging with regional powers like Iran and the UAE to protect vital sea lines of communication (SLOCs).
- **Call for National Austerity:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appealed for austerity measures, including reducing gold purchases and optimizing fuel consumption through carpooling and public transport. These behavioral shifts are aimed at reducing the Current Account Deficit (CAD) and easing pressure on the Indian Rupee.
- **Strengthening Export Compliance:** New regulations mandate physical inspections of manufacturing facilities and require fulfillment of 50% of export obligations before subsequent duty-free authorizations are granted. This represents a shift toward a more monitored and centralized policy oversight mechanism to prevent misuse of trade incentives.
- **Geopolitical Balancing Act:** India's diplomatic stance maintains that "stability cannot be selective." By condemning attacks on Indian-flagged vessels while simultaneously hosting BRICS dialogues, New Delhi is positioning itself as a key mediator in safeguarding Global South interests amidst escalating regional tensions.



Key Definitions

- **Withholding Tax (WHT):** An income tax deducted at the source from payments (like interest) made to non-residents, ensuring tax collection before the income leaves the country.
- **Advance Authorisation (AA) Scheme:** A trade incentive that allows the duty-free import of inputs (like raw gold) which are physically incorporated into an export product (like jewelry).
- **Forex Reserves:** Assets held by a central bank in foreign currencies, used to back liabilities and influence monetary policy to maintain exchange rate stability.
- **Price Arbitrage:** The practice of taking advantage of a price difference between two or more markets; in this context, importing gold duty-free to sell in the domestic market where duties are high.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 246 (Seventh Schedule):** Under the Union List, the Parliament has exclusive power over "Duties of customs including export duties" (Entry 83) and "Taxes on income other than agricultural income" (Entry 82).
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Provides the legal framework for the DGFT to formulate and implement the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP), including schemes like Advance Authorisation.



- **Article 51 of the Constitution:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) that mandates the state to promote international peace, security, and the maintenance of just relations between nations.
- **Income Tax Act, 1961:** Governs the levying and collection of Tax Deducted at Source (TDS) and sets the statutory rates for withholding taxes on foreign investments.

Conclusion

The current economic strategy reflects a dual-pronged approach: incentivizing foreign capital inflows by easing tax burdens while simultaneously restricting the outflow of foreign exchange through tighter control on gold imports. This "defensive fiscalism," coupled with proactive maritime diplomacy in West Asia, highlights the government's priority to shield the domestic economy from external shocks. While austerity measures address the demand side, regulatory shifts in the AA scheme address the supply-side leakages, aiming for a sustainable balance in India's external account.

UPSC Relevance

This topic is critical for **General Studies Paper III (Economy)**, specifically regarding "Issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, and development." It also covers "Indian Economy and issues relating to inflation, government budgeting, and foreign trade." For **General Studies Paper II (International Relations)**, it is relevant to "Bilateral, regional and global groupings involving India and/or affecting India's interests." Aspirants should analyze the linkage between fiscal policy (WHT cuts), trade policy (AA Scheme caps), and geopolitics (Strait of Hormuz security) as a cohesive strategy for maintaining macroeconomic stability in a volatile global environment.

7. Shift in India's Sugar Export Policy: From Restricted to Prohibited

- **Regulatory Shift in Export Regime:** The Government of India has moved sugar exports from the "restricted" category to the "prohibited" category until September 30, 2026. This mandate by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) effectively halts the export of raw, white, and refined sugar to prioritize domestic food security.
- **Domestic Production and Supply Concerns:** With annual consumption estimated at 28 million tonnes (mt), current production for the 2025-26 season is projected to barely meet this requirement at approximately 28 mt. The early closure of mills—with only five operational by late April compared to 19 the previous year—indicates a significant tightening of the supply side.
- **Inflationary Pressures and Festive Demand:** The primary trigger for the ban is the rising trend in wholesale sugar prices. By curbing exports, the government aims to prevent a retail price spike ahead of the high-consumption festive season, thereby managing overall food inflation.
- **Climatic Risks and El Niño Factor:** Policymakers are wary of the impact of El Niño on sugarcane yields. Potential water stress in key producing states like Maharashtra and Karnataka could lead to a second consecutive year of suboptimal production, necessitating the conservation of current stocks.
- **Linkage with Biofuel Goals:** The ban ensures that sugarcane byproducts remain available for the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme. Maintaining a steady supply of feedstock for ethanol is crucial for meeting India's green energy targets and reducing the crude oil import bill.





- **Global Market and Trade Reliability:** As the world's second-largest sugar producer, India's exit from the export market has led to an immediate rise in international prices. While this benefits competitors like Brazil and Thailand, it raises concerns regarding India's "policy predictability" and its reputation as a reliable global food supplier.

Key Definitions

- **Prohibited Category:** A trade classification under the Foreign Trade Policy where goods cannot be exported at all, except under specific permissions or bilateral agreements.
- **El Niño:** A climate pattern characterized by the unusual warming of surface waters in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, often leading to suppressed monsoon rainfall in India.
- **Ethanol Blending:** The process of mixing ethyl alcohol (derived from sugarcane molasses or grains) with petrol to reduce vehicular emissions and fuel imports.
- **Food Inflation:** A persistent rise in the price levels of food products, measured in India primarily through the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** The principal legislation that empowers the Central Government to notify the Export and Import (EXIM) Policy and prohibit or restrict trade in specific goods.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** This Act allows the government to regulate the production, supply, and distribution of a whole range of commodities (including sugar) to ensure availability at fair prices.
- **Article 39(b):** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) which dictates that the State shall direct its policy towards ensuring that the ownership and control of the material resources of the community are so distributed as best to subserve the common good.
- **Seventh Schedule (Union List):** Entry 41 (Trade and commerce with foreign countries) and Entry 83 (Duties of customs including export duties) provide the constitutional basis for the Union's exclusive control over export bans.

Conclusion

The abrupt ban on sugar exports underscores the government's "India-first" approach to food security and inflation management. While the move protects domestic consumers and the ethanol program, it creates a challenging environment for sugar mills and international trade relations. Balancing the interests of farmers, who benefit from high export prices, with the urban consumer's need for affordable staples remains a complex task for fiscal and agricultural planners.

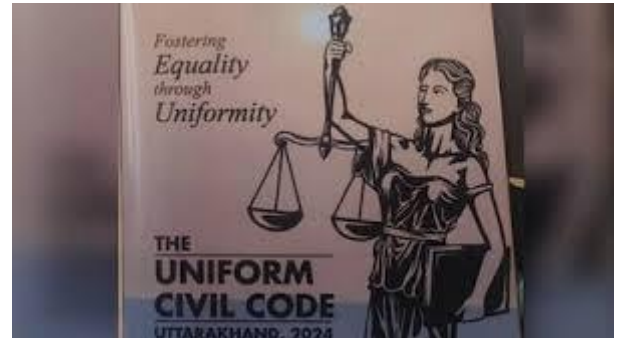
UPSC Relevance

This topic is highly relevant for **General Studies Paper III (Economy & Agriculture)**, particularly under the heads of "Major Crops/Cropping Patterns," "Food Security," and "Inflation." It also links to **General Studies Paper II (Governance)** regarding the use of executive power in trade regulation. For the **Preliminary Exam**, candidates should focus on the role of the DGFT and the impact of El Niño on Indian monsoons. For the **Main Exam**, the focus should be on the tension between "Export-led Growth" and "Domestic Price Stability," as well as the implications of frequent policy shifts on India's standing in global trade forums like the WTO.



8. Implementation of Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code: First Nikah Halala Case

- **First Legal Invocation of UCC:** For the first time since its enactment, the Uttarakhand police have invoked specific provisions of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in a case involving the practice of 'Nikah Halala'. The charges were added following an investigation into a complaint filed in Haridwar, marking a significant milestone in the implementation of the state's unified civil laws.
- **Multi-dimensional Charges:** The case is not limited to marriage laws; it involves a combination of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Dowry Prohibition Act, and the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act. This reflects a comprehensive legal approach to addressing complaints of dowry harassment, cruelty, and illegal marriage practices.
- **Specific UCC Provisions Applied:** During the investigation, evidence led the police to add Sections 32(1)(ii) and 32(1)(iii) of the Uttarakhand UCC. These sections specifically target practices that impose regressive conditions on remarriage, treating them as punishable offenses under the new civil framework.
- **Curbing Regressive Practices:** The invocation of the UCC in this context highlights the state's objective to abolish practices like Nikah Halala, which have been historically contentious. The law seeks to ensure that marriage and divorce procedures are governed by a uniform standard that protects the dignity and fundamental rights of women.
- **Judicial and Police Action:** Following the registration of the FIR in April, a chargesheet has been submitted naming nine accused individuals. The swift transition from investigation to chargesheet under the UCC suggests a high degree of state resolve in enforcing the new civil mandates.
- **Context of Legal Reform:** This case serves as a litmus test for the UCC's ability to interact with existing criminal laws and personal law protections. It sets a legal precedent for how future disputes regarding personal practices will be adjudicated within the jurisdiction of Uttarakhand.



Key Definitions

- **Nikah Halala:** A practice in certain interpretations of personal law where a divorced woman must marry another man, consummate that marriage, and then be divorced by him before she can legally remarry her original husband.
- **Uniform Civil Code (UCC):** A common set of laws governing personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption for all citizens, regardless of their religion, as envisioned under the Indian Constitution.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS):** The primary criminal code of India that replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC), under which the general criminal charges in this case were filed.
- **Chargesheet:** A formal document prepared by law enforcement agencies after an investigation, outlining the specific crimes the accused are alleged to have committed and the evidence supporting those claims.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 44:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) which states that the State shall endeavor to secure for the citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India.



- **Article 14 & 15:** Constitutional guarantees of Equality before the Law and Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, which form the bedrock of the argument for a UCC.
- **Article 25:** Guarantees freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion, which is often cited in the debate over personal laws versus a uniform code.
- **The Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code Act, 2024:** The specific state legislation that provides the legal authority to override certain religious personal laws in favor of a uniform secular code within the state.

Conclusion

The filing of the first chargesheet under the UCC for Nikah Halala in Uttarakhand represents a transition from legislative theory to practical enforcement. While it addresses long-standing concerns regarding women's rights and gender justice, it also tests the legal harmony between state-specific civil codes and national criminal statutes. The outcome of this case will likely influence the discourse on the nationwide implementation of a Uniform Civil Code and the protection of individual liberties within personal spheres.

UPSC Relevance

This topic is highly pertinent for **General Studies Paper II (Polity and Governance)**, specifically regarding "Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies" and "Significant provisions and basic structure of the Constitution." It also touches upon **General Studies Paper I (Social Issues)** concerning the "Role of women and women's organization" and "Social empowerment." For the **Preliminary Exam**, focus on the DPSP (Article 44) and the specific jurisdiction of states to enact civil laws. For the **Main Exam**, the focus should be on the challenges of balancing "Religious Freedom (Art. 25)" with "Gender Justice and Equality (Art. 14 & 15)," and the federal implications of a state-led UCC.

9. Transitioning from Sick-Care to Preventive Health Stewardship in India

- **Paradigm Shift in Healthcare:** India is at a civilizational crossroads where it must transition from a system that effectively responds to illness to one that actively preserves health. While the nation has built world-class clinical infrastructure over four decades, the focus must now shift from "treating the broken" to "preventing the break" through continuous, deliberate care.
- **The Burden of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs):** NCDs, including cardiovascular diseases, strokes, cancer, and diabetes, have surpassed infectious diseases as the leading cause of death in India. Approximately 270 million Indians currently live with chronic conditions, with a significant majority remaining undiagnosed until organ failure or severe symptoms occur.
- **The "Turning Point" Decade:** Insights from the Apollo Hospitals Health of the Nation Report 2026 identify the age bracket of 30 to 40 years as a critical window. This decade is when early metabolic and cardiovascular risks typically take root; however, it is also the period when individuals are least likely to seek care because they do not yet "feel unwell."
- **Economic Implications for Democracy:** Preventable illnesses pose a severe threat to India's "demographic dividend." The loss of productivity during an individual's peak working years diminishes their contribution to the economy and family, potentially stalling the nation's trajectory toward its highest potential.





- **Philosophy of Self-Stewardship:** Preventive health is being redefined not as a government policy or campaign, but as a personal and civic duty. It requires a transformation of habit—moving toward a culture of routine health checks and lifestyle corrections while the body remains resilient.
- **Active Commitment to Longevity:** The ambition for India to become a global economic and social leader rests entirely on the vitality of its citizens. This requires understanding health not merely as the absence of disease, but as an active, daily commitment to life made within homes and families.

Key Definitions

- **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs):** Also known as chronic diseases, these are not passed from person to person. They are of long duration and generally slow progression, often linked to genetics, physiology, environment, and lifestyle.
- **Metabolic Risk:** Biochemical processes that increase the risk of developing cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes, such as high blood pressure, elevated blood sugar, and abnormal cholesterol levels.
- **Demographic Dividend:** The economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population is larger than the non-working-age share.
- **Self-Stewardship:** The philosophy of taking personal responsibility for the management and protection of one's own health as a long-term asset.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** The Right to Life and Personal Liberty. The Supreme Court has repeatedly interpreted this to include the "Right to Health" and the right to live in a healthy environment.
- **Article 47:** A Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) which mandates that the State shall regard the raising of the level of nutrition and the standard of living of its people and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties.
- **National Health Policy (NHP) 2017:** Aims to attain the highest possible level of health and well-being for all at all ages through a preventive and promotive health care orientation.
- **Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY):** While famous for insurance, its first pillar involves establishing Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs) to provide Comprehensive Primary Health Care, including NCD screening and prevention.

Conclusion

India's remarkable clinical achievements must now be matched by an equally robust culture of prevention. The "Health of the Nation" depends on recognizing that medical intervention is often a late-stage response to avoidable choices. By focusing on the critical window of early adulthood and embracing health stewardship, India can protect its most valuable resource—its people—and ensure that its economic ambitions are supported by a resilient and long-lived workforce.

UPSC Relevance

This topic is highly pertinent for **General Studies Paper II (Social Justice - Issues relating to Health)** and **General Studies Paper III (Indian Economy - Human Resource Development)**. In the **Preliminary Examination**, candidates should be aware of the trends in NCDs and the objectives of the National Health Policy. For the **Main Examination**, the focus should be on the linkage between "Public Health and Economic Productivity," the challenges of the "Epidemiological Transition" (from infectious to chronic



diseases), and the role of "Behavioral Change Communication" in achieving national health targets. Understanding the shift from curative to preventive care is essential for writing balanced essays on India's social sector development.

10. India's External Sector Vulnerabilities: Capital Outflows and Currency Strain

- **Unprecedented Rupee Depreciation:** In early May 2026, the Indian Rupee (INR) breached the 95 mark against the US Dollar, hitting all-time lows. This depreciation, exceeding 10% over the last year, is significantly higher than the historical average of 3-5%, driven by a combination of high import bills and massive capital flight.
- **Geopolitical Disruptions and Energy Security:** The outbreak of hostilities in the Persian Gulf and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz have acted as primary triggers for economic instability. With India importing approximately 85% of its crude oil, these disruptions have inflated the import bill, widened the Current Account Deficit (CAD), and sparked fears of persistent "imported inflation."
- **Asymmetric Capital Flight:** A concerning trend in 2026 is that capital outflows from emerging markets like India are occurring even in the absence of actual interest rate hikes by the US Federal Reserve or the Bank of England. This suggests that foreign investors have already "priced in" future rate hikes or are reacting to extreme geopolitical uncertainty, leaving India vulnerable to further pressure if actual rate increases occur.
- **The "Taper Tantrum" Parallel:** The current economic climate echoes the 2013 Taper Tantrum. Investors are withdrawing capital based on the mere expectation of tightening global monetary conditions. This flight to safety (moving capital to the US Dollar) forces a difficult choice: raising domestic interest rates to defend the currency, which risks stalling domestic investment, or allowing the rupee to slide further.
- **Social and Economic Consequences:** The rise in LPG and petrol prices has moved beyond a fiscal issue to a social one, triggering reverse migration of workers from urban centers back to villages. Furthermore, high energy costs are feeding into broader inflationary expectations, potentially leading to a wage-price spiral that could destabilize macroeconomic stability.
- **Policy Interventions and Their Limits:** The government and RBI have employed "moral suasion," increased import duties on gold, and restricted foreign exchange derivative contracts to curb speculation. However, experts warn that these are short-term measures that do not address the underlying structural vulnerability of high dependence on imported energy and volatile foreign portfolio investments.



Key Definitions

- **Capital Flight:** The large-scale exit of financial assets and capital from a country, typically due to geopolitical instability, economic crises, or unfavorable changes in interest rates.
- **Taper Tantrum:** A term referring to the 2013 collective reactionary panic in financial markets after the US Federal Reserve announced it would begin "tapering" its quantitative easing (bond-buying) program.
- **Current Account Deficit (CAD):** A measurement of a country's trade where the value of the goods and services it imports exceeds the value of the products it exports.



- **Strait of Hormuz:** A strategic waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman; it is the world's most important oil transit chokepoint, through which roughly 20-30% of global oil passes.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 246 (Seventh Schedule):** The Union List (Entry 36) gives the Central Government exclusive power over "Foreign exchange," allowing the RBI and Finance Ministry to regulate capital flows and currency markets.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** The primary legal framework in India that regulates foreign exchange transactions and capital account management.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003:** Sets targets for the government to reduce fiscal deficits, which is crucial for maintaining investor confidence and stabilizing the external sector.
- **Article 51 (A) (h) & (j):** While Fundamental Duties, the spirit of scientific temper and striving toward excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity underpins the call for national austerity and economic resilience.

Conclusion

The current strain on the Indian Rupee is a symptom of deep-seated structural vulnerabilities exposed by global geopolitical shocks. While the government's push for austerity in gold and fuel consumption is a necessary signal, it must be supported by long-term strategies such as energy diversification, ethanol blending, and enhancing export competitiveness. India is navigating a "perfect storm" of high oil prices, capital flight, and global uncertainty, necessitating a cautious yet proactive monetary and fiscal stance.

UPSC Relevance

This topic is vital for **General Studies Paper III (Indian Economy)** under "Mobilization of Resources," "Growth and Development," and "Inflation." It is also highly relevant for **General Studies Paper II (International Relations)** regarding how "Global Groupings and Agreements affect India's interests." For **Prelims**, focus on terms like CAD, Taper Tantrum, and the geography of West Asian chokepoints. For **Mains**, prepare to analyze the "Trilemma of International Finance" (the inability to have a fixed exchange rate, free capital movement, and independent monetary policy simultaneously) and its application to the current Indian context.

11. Analysis of India's Labour Market: Insights from PLFS 2025

- **Positive Shifts in Employment Indicators:** According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2025, India's headline employment indicators have shown robustness, with the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) at 59% and the unemployment rate stabilizing at 3%. A notable decline in youth unemployment across both rural and urban sectors suggests that the economy is beginning to better absorb the 7-10 million young entrants joining the workforce annually.
- **Improving Quality of Work:** There is a visible structural shift toward formalization, with regular salaried employment increasing from 22% to 24%. This transition is critical as salaried roles typically offer higher earnings and better social protection compared to self-employment, which saw a corresponding decline. For women, this shift is particularly impactful, with female earnings in salaried roles growing by 7%, outpacing the 6% growth for men.
- **Structural Transformation and Inclusivity:** The Indian economy is moving away from agrarian dependence, with agriculture's share of employment dropping to 43%. Concurrently, manufacturing and services have expanded to 12% and 13% respectively. Furthermore, occupational segregation



based on caste and gender is diminishing among younger cohorts, reflecting the positive outcomes of expanded access to education and increased social mobility.

- **Persistent Gender Pay and Participation Gaps:** Despite progress, a significant "double burden" remains for women, who cite childcare and household duties as primary barriers to workforce entry. Wage disparities are also stark; women in self-employment earn only 36% of what their male counterparts do, while in salaried work, they earn roughly 76%. This highlights the need for gender-responsive interventions to address unpaid care work.
- **The Challenge of NEET and Skill Mismatch:** Approximately 25% of youth aged 15-29 fall into the 'Not in Education, Employment, or Training' (NEET) category, representing a potential detachment from the productive economy. Additionally, while tertiary education has expanded, a gap exists between graduation and job procurement, compounded by the fact that only 4% of the working-age population has received formal vocational training.
- **Strategic Roadmap for Demographic Dividend:** To translate demographic potential into sustained growth, the report advocates for scaling industry-relevant vocational training, where participation rates are significantly higher. Leveraging green sectors and expanding apprenticeship programs are identified as essential pathways to re-engage the NEET population and provide stable, social-protected employment.

Key Definitions

- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR):** The percentage of the population that is either working or actively looking for work. It measures the size of the economy's active labour supply.
- **NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training):** A socio-economic indicator referring to young people who are currently disengaged from both the educational system and the labour market.
- **Structural Transformation:** The process by which the share of agriculture in GDP and employment declines, while the shares of manufacturing and services increase.
- **Demographic Dividend:** The economic growth potential that results from a shift in a population's age structure, specifically when the working-age population (15-64) is larger than the non-working-age share.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 39(a) and 39(d):** Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) that mandate the State to ensure all citizens have the right to an adequate means of livelihood and that there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women.
- **Article 41:** Directs the State to ensure the right to work and education within the limits of its economic capacity.
- **Article 43:** Mandates the State to secure a living wage and conditions of work ensuring a decent standard of life for all workers.
- **The Code on Wages, 2019:** Aims to universalize the provisions of minimum wages and timely payment of wages, specifically prohibiting gender discrimination in matters related to wages.

Conclusion

The PLFS 2025 data paints a picture of an evolving labour market that is successfully shedding some of its traditional constraints. While the rise in formal salaried work and declining youth unemployment are markers of progress, the persistent gender earnings gap and the high proportion of NEET youth signify



deep-seated structural hurdles. Achieving India's economic ambitions will depend on moving beyond basic education to high-quality, specialized skill development and creating a supportive ecosystem for women's workforce participation.

UPSC Relevance

This topic is indispensable for **General Studies Paper III (Indian Economy)**, specifically under "Issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment." It also links to **General Studies Paper II (Social Justice)** regarding the "Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors." In the **Preliminary Examination**, candidates should focus on interpreting PLFS terminology and trends. For the **Main Examination**, the data provides evidence for arguments on "Jobless Growth," "Women Empowerment," and the "Skill India Mission." Understanding the nuances of NEET and structural transformation is essential for writing comprehensive answers on India's demographic challenges.

12. Vande Mataram: Historical Context and the Debate on Multicultural Nationalism

- **Mandatory Usage in Official Ceremonies:** In February 2026, the Government of India mandated the playing or singing of the full version of *Vande Mataram* at all official state functions. This was recently observed during the oath-taking ceremony of the 13th Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, C. Joseph Vijay, where the song was performed alongside the National Anthem and the State Anthem (*Tamil Thai Vaazhthu*).
- **Historical Origins and Literary Context:** Written by Bankim Chandra Chatterji in his 1882 novel *Anandamath*, the song was originally set against the backdrop of the Sannyasi Rebellion. Early English translations, such as the 1906 *Abbey of Bliss*, highlight that the novel's narrative contained strong anti-Muslim sentiments and viewed British rule as a transformative force for reviving Hindu objective knowledge.
- **Evolution of the Song's Narrative:** During the independence movement, the song was "sanitized" in subsequent translations (notably in 1941) to remove communal undertones and align with the secular goals of the freedom struggle. While the song became a powerful anti-colonial slogan, scholars argue that the original context remained rooted in religious nationalism rather than a multicultural identity.
- **The 1937 Congress Compromise:** Recognizing that the later stanzas of the song invoked specific religious imagery that could alienate minority communities, a Congress sub-committee led by Jawaharlal Nehru resolved in 1937 to sing only the first two stanzas. These stanzas focus on the natural beauty and abundance of the motherland, omitting the sections with religious glorification.
- **Constituent Assembly and National Status:** During the drafting of the Constitution, despite strong advocacy from members like Syama Prasad Mookerjee, *Jana Gana Mana* was adopted as the National Anthem due to its inclusive character. *Vande Mataram* was accorded the status of "National Song," with the understanding that it held equal honor but a different functional role in a secular state.
- **Modern Debate on Multiculturalism:** The current push to sing the full version has reignited concerns among opposition parties and civil society. Critics argue that imposing a text with specific





religious origins at secular government events may undermine the "monocultural vs. multicultural" balance of Indian nationalism and the constitutional promise of secularism.

Key Definitions

- **National Song:** A patriotic song (*Vande Mataram*) that holds equal status with the National Anthem but is not governed by the same strict statutory rules for performance.
- **Multicultural Nationalism:** A form of nationalism that defines the national identity through a synthesis of various cultures, languages, and religions, rather than a single dominant tradition.
- **Secularism (Indian Context):** Unlike the Western concept of separation of church and state, Indian secularism (*Sarva Dharma Sambhava*) implies equal respect for all religions and state neutrality in religious matters.
- **Sannyasi Rebellion:** A late 18th-century uprising in Bengal involving monks and displaced peasants against the East India Company, which served as the historical inspiration for *Anandamath*.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51A(a):** A Fundamental Duty of every citizen to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag, and the National Anthem (notably, the National Song is not explicitly mentioned here, though it is respected by custom).
- **Article 25 to 28:** Guarantees Freedom of Religion, which includes the right not to be compelled to participate in religious rituals or prayers in state-funded educational institutions or government functions.
- **State Song Status (Tamil Nadu):** In 2021, the Tamil Nadu government declared *Tamil Thai Vaazhthu* as the State Song, mandating that people stand (except PwDs), following a Madras High Court observation that it was previously regarded only as a prayer song.
- **The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971:** Provides for punishment for those who intentionally prevent the singing of the National Anthem or cause disturbance to an assembly engaged in such singing. The Act does not currently extend the same penal provisions to the National Song.

Conclusion

The revival of the full version of *Vande Mataram* represents a tension between historical ritual and the evolving needs of a pluralistic democracy. While the song remains a symbol of India's struggle for independence, its mandatory use in official settings raises fundamental questions about state neutrality. Balancing patriotic fervor with the protection of India's multicultural fabric is essential to ensuring that national symbols unite rather than divide the citizenry.

UPSC Relevance

This topic is highly relevant for **General Studies Paper II (Polity & Governance)** under "Significant provisions and basic structure of the Constitution" and **General Studies Paper I (Indian Heritage and Culture)**. In the **Preliminary Exam**, questions may focus on the differences between the National Anthem and National Song, the history of *Anandamath*, or the 1937 Congress resolution. For the **Main Exam**, this is a critical topic for discussing "Secularism," "Regionalism vs. Nationalism," and the "Role of Judiciary in protecting cultural rights." Aspirants should be prepared to analyze the concept of "Constitutional Morality" in the context of state-mandated symbols.