



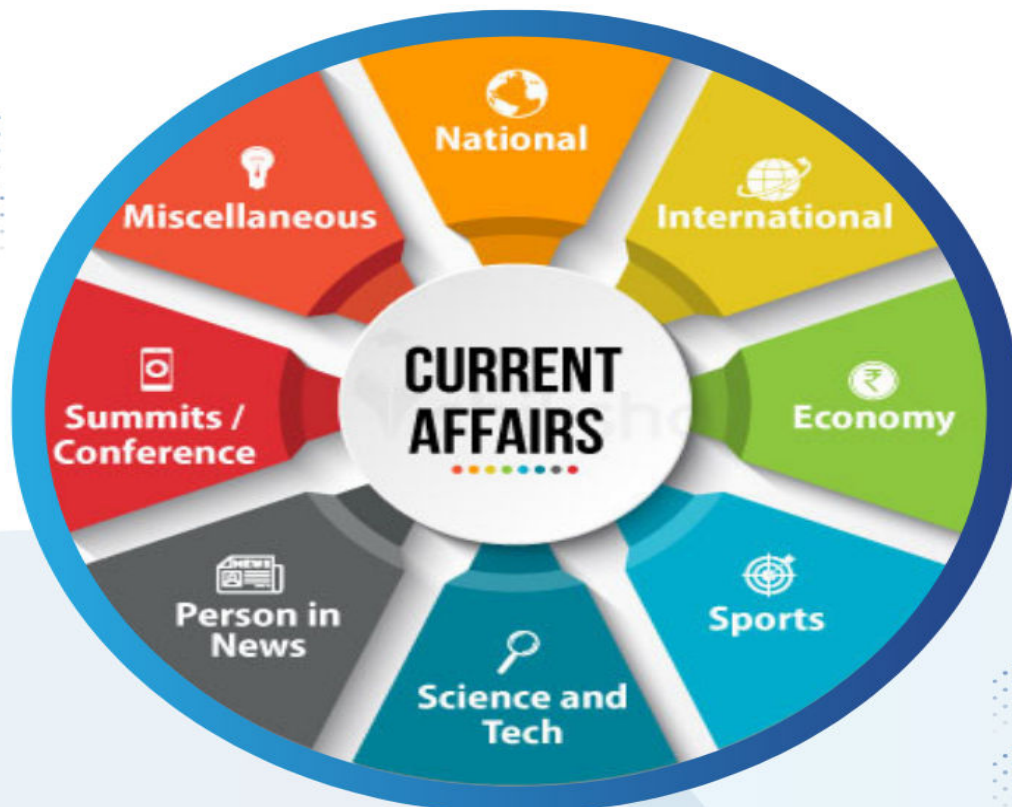
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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 17/06/2026 (WEDNESDAY)



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VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. India's Monsoon Deficit and Kharif Contingency Plan

- **Context of Deficit:** India faces a 35% nationwide monsoon deficit as the advancement of rain clouds stalls. Central India is worst hit with a 61% deficit, followed by the East/Northeast (-43%) and Southern Peninsula (-14%), while Northwest India records a 5% surplus.
- **Government Interventions:** The Union Agriculture Ministry has placed 150–200 districts under priority monitoring. States are directed to formulate crop-wise contingency plans, mandate weekly El Niño reviews, and promote a crop shift toward climate-resilient cotton and pulses.
- **Mitigation & Reservoir Health:** Unlike previous El Niño cycles, live storage in major reservoirs stands at 30.4% of capacity (higher than the historical El Niño average of 25.1%), providing a buffer for irrigation despite early-season rainfall shortfalls.
- **Key Concept Definitions:** El Niño refers to the abnormal warming of surface waters in the equatorial Pacific Ocean, typically suppressing the Indian summer monsoon. A **Super El Niño** signifies extreme ocean warming, threatening severe agricultural droughts.
- **Constitutional & Legal Framework:** Under **Schedule 7 (State List, Item 14)**, Agriculture is a State subject, making states responsible for executing contingency plans. However, **Disaster Management Act, 2005** and **Article 216** (via central schemes) enable the Union government to issue binding advisories, fund alternative seeds, and monitor national food security parameters during dry spells.

Hanging clouds

While a monsoon deficit in June is not unusual, it assumes additional significance in a year which has been globally forecast to witness a 'Super El Niño'

Rainfall departures for El Niño years since 2000:

	June	Whole southwest monsoon
2002	+2%	19% below LPA*
2004	+1%	13% below LPA
2009	-47%	22% below LPA
2014	-44%	12% below LPA
2015	+14%	14% below LPA
2023	-8%	6% below LPA



*LPA: Long Period Average

Source: IMD

Conclusion

While early June deficits are common, the looming threat of a Super El Niño necessitates aggressive structural adaptation. Robust reservoir management and micro-level crop diversification will be critical to safeguarding India's macroeconomic stability and food security.

UPSC Relevance

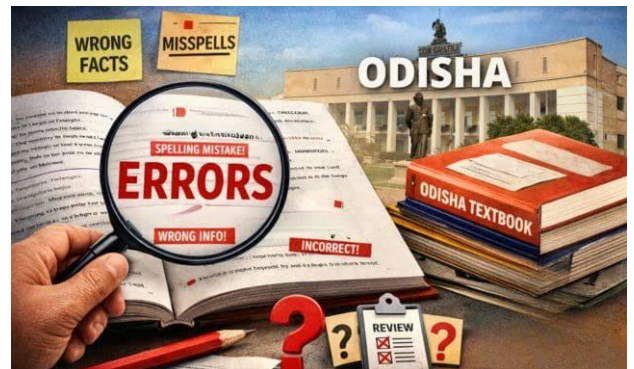
- **GS Paper I (Geography):** Mechanism of Indian Monsoon, spatial distribution of rainfall, and the impact of El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO) on tropical weather patterns.
- **GS Paper III (Agriculture & Economy):** Cropping patterns, drought management, climate-resilient agriculture, and the economic implications of monsoon failure on inflation and food security.

2. Textbook Errors in Odisha: Quality Concerns in School Education

- **Core Issue:** Teachers' associations and parents' groups in Odisha have raised concerns over 1,678 "widespread errors" and geographical inaccuracies in newly introduced school textbooks (Classes 1 to 8) aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- **Specific Inaccuracies:** Key errors include a photograph of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly mislabeled as the Odisha Assembly, Berhampur incorrectly listed as a district (it is a city in Ganjam district), and Niyamgiri—the home of the Dongria Kondh tribe—wrongly shown as being located in Jharkhand instead of Odisha.
- **Government Response:** The School and Mass Education Minister has acknowledged the administrative lapses and directed teachers to manually rectify errors and instruct students using corrected materials rather than waiting for a complete textbook reprint.



- **Key Concept Definition: Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** are a sub-classification within Scheduled Tribes in India created to identify communities with declining populations, pre-agricultural technology, low literacy, and extreme economic backwardness. The Dongria Kondh of Niyamgiri, Odisha, is one of the 75 listed PVTGs.
- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions:** Under **Article 21A** (Right to Education Act, 2009), the state is mandated to provide free, compulsory, and *quality* education. While Education falls under the **Concurrent List (Entry 25, 42nd Amendment)** allowing both Center and States to legislate, local curriculum implementation is governed by State Education Boards, making strict quality control an administrative obligation under the state's public service delivery framework.



Conclusion

Quality control in educational material is foundational to achieving the human capital targets of NEP 2020. Bureaucratic oversight in textbook formulation not only distorts foundational knowledge for young learners but also undermines state accountability, requiring a institutionalized, multi-tier vetting mechanism before publication.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Social Justice):** Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education and Human Resources; accountability and institutional lapses in public service delivery.
- **GS Paper I (Geography & Society):** Distribution of PVTGs and tribal communities in India (Dongria Kondh, Niyamgiri hills location), and the impact of regional geography mapping accuracy.

3. Reconstitution of Aravallis Panel: Demands for Critical Ecological Zone

- **Core Issue:** The Aravalli Virasat Jan Abhiyaan (AVJA), an environmental coalition, has petitioned the Chief Justice of India (CJI) seeking the immediate reconstitution of a Supreme Court-appointed committee tasked with defining and managing the 700-km Aravalli mountain range.
- **Institutional Conflict:** Activists demand that neither the Chairperson nor the Member Secretary of the panel should be serving officers of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), arguing that independent ecologists, environmentalists, or scientists free from ministry control are vital to ensure unbiased domain expertise.
- **Definition Dispute:** The representation, submitted on the eve of the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, strongly opposes the "regressive" uniform definition of the Aravallis accepted by the Supreme Court in its November 20, 2025 order and demands it be scrapped.





- **Ecological Protection:** The group has urged the judiciary to officially declare the remnants of the Aravalli range as a 'Critical Ecological Zone' to safeguard it from rampant mining, urbanization, and rapid degradation.
- **Key Concept Definitions: Critical Ecological Zone (CEZ)** refers to a geographically vulnerable area requiring stringent legal protections against developmental activities due to its role in maintaining biodiversity and environmental stability. The Aravallis act as a critical ecological barrier protecting northwest India from desertification.
- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions:** Under **Article 48A** (Directive Principles), the State is mandated to protect and improve the environment. **Article 51A(g)** imposes a Fundamental Duty on citizens to protect natural environments. Furthermore, the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986** gives the central government the statutory power to declare ecologically sensitive areas and restrict industrial operations to protect fragile eco-systems like the Aravallis.

Conclusion

The demand for institutional independence in environmental committees highlights the need for ecological governance to be free from executive conflict of interest. Protecting the Aravallis requires an objective, science-based approach that balances regulatory enforcement with active conservation to prevent micro-climate degradation and desert expansion in northern India.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Environment & Ecology):** Conservation, environmental degradation, environmental impact assessment, and the role of judicial committees in ecological governance.
- **GS Paper I (Geography):** Physical features of India, significance of the Aravalli range as a barrier against desertification, and water security in the National Capital Region (NCR).

4. Geopolitical Realignments: US-Iran Ceasefire and Global Implications

- **Limits of Military Force:** The escalation of the US-Iran conflict highlights that military force alone cannot resolve deep-seated geopolitical crises without a comprehensive political settlement, as seen across various friction points like Ukraine, Gaza, Lebanon, and Sudan.
- **The Fragile US-Iran Deal:** A digitally signed US-Iran deal reflects mutual exhaustion. The deal outlines the unconditional opening of the Strait of Hormuz, a multi-front halt to hostilities (including Lebanon), lifting of oil sanctions, and unfreezing of assets, followed by a 60-day window to negotiate uranium enrichment.
- **West Asian Fault Lines:** The conflict has exposed deep divisions within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Strategic divergences between Saudi Arabia and the UAE over Yemen and Sudan, combined with the UAE exiting OPEC, signal a fragmentation of collective Arab energy and security policy.
- **Global Power Dynamics:** While Russia and China benefit from the US being strategically bogged down, China monitors the conflict for lessons regarding the Taiwan Strait. Conversely, Pakistan's strategic proximity to the US has increased, potentially altering South Asian security dynamics.
- **Key Concept Definitions: Strategic Autonomy** is a foreign policy framework where a nation retains independent decision-making capabilities without being bound by rigid military alliances.





Abraham Accords refer to US-brokered bilateral normalization agreements signed between Israel and several Arab nations since 2020.

- **Constitutional & Legal Framework:** Under **Article 51** of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), India is constitutionally mandated to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law, providing the foundational basis for India's balanced diplomatic stance.

Conclusion

The US-Iran deal acts as a fragile truce rather than a permanent settlement. For long-term stability, West Asia must transition from zero-sum military engagements to an inclusive regional security architecture that integrates all state actors, balancing overlapping middle-power ambitions.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India and affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's diaspora and energy security.
- **GS Paper I (Geography):** Geopolitically sensitive choke points, specifically the economic and maritime significance of the Strait of Hormuz in global trade.

5. US Court Strikes Down H-1B Visa Fee Hike: Implications for India

- **Judicial Intervention:** A US District Court has struck down Proclamation 10973, which sought to impose a prohibitive \$100,000 supplemental fee on H-1B visa petitions for highly skilled foreign professionals.
- **Separation of Powers:** The court ruled that the exorbitant fee constituted an unlawful 'tax' rather than a regulatory 'penalty'. Under Article I, Section 8 of the US Constitution, the power to levy taxes rests exclusively with Congress and cannot be usurped by the Executive without explicit legislative delegation.
- **H-1B Architecture:** Established under the Immigration Act of 1990, the H-1B visa allows US employers to temporarily employ foreign professionals in "specialty occupations" requiring a bachelor's degree or higher. It is capped at 65,000 visas annually, with an extra 20,000 for advanced degree holders, excluding research and academic institutions.
- **Impact on India:** As Indian nationals secure approximately 70% of all approved H-1B visas—predominantly within Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields—the decision provides significant relief to Indian IT firms, doctors, and engineering professionals facing green card backlogs.
- **Key Concept Definitions: Specialty Occupation** refers to a position requiring the theoretical and practical application of a highly specialized body of human knowledge, alongside a bachelor's degree or its equivalent. **Administrative Procedure Act (APA)** is a US statute governing how federal agencies propose and establish regulations, ensuring transparency and preventing arbitrary executive actions.
- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions:** While this centers on US law, it highlights the principle of **Separation of Powers**, a basic structure of the Indian Constitution (**Article 50**). In India, **Article 265**





mandates that "no tax shall be levied or collected except by authority of law," mirroring the legal doctrine used by the US court to invalidate the executive overreach.

Conclusion

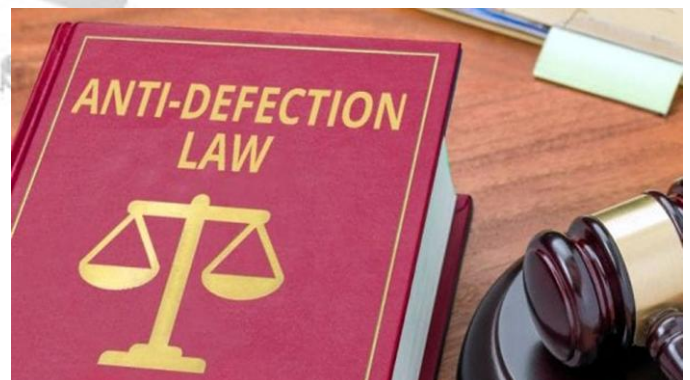
The reversal of the H-1B fee hike protects global talent mobility and prevents immediate disruptions across the healthcare, technology, and academia sectors. It reinforces the role of judicial review in keeping immigration policy bound to legislative authorization rather than arbitrary protectionist measures.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora, and bilateral trade dynamics.
- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Comparative constitutional law, doctrine of separation of powers, and the limits of executive decree versus legislative taxation powers.

6. Tenth Schedule and Party Mergers: Interpreting the Anti-Defection Law

- **Context of Controversy:** Recent political friction involving splits within the Trinamool Congress (TMC)—where 20 out of 28 Lok Sabha MPs announced a merger with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI) and around 60 MLAs formed a separate faction in West Bengal—has renewed intense focus on the merger exemptions under the Anti-Defection Law.
- **Constitutional Intent:** The Tenth Schedule was enacted via the 52nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1985, to curb the destabilizing politics of opportunistic defections ("Aaya Ram, Gaya Ram" culture) by disqualifying legislators who voluntarily give up party membership or vote against party whips.
- **Evolution of Merger Exceptions:** Originally, the law protected splits (one-third members breaking away under Paragraph 3) and mergers (two-thirds members joining another party under Paragraph 4). However, the 91st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003, deleted Paragraph 3, making an institutional merger the only valid path to escape disqualification.
- **The Legal Fiction of Paragraph 4:** For a valid exemption under Paragraph 4, a dual requirement must be met: the "original political party" must decide to merge with another outfit, and cumulatively, not less than two-thirds of the members of the "legislature party" must agree to that merger.
- **Key Concept Definitions: Political Party** refers to the entire organizational structure of a party outside the house, registered under the Representation of the People Act, 1951. **Legislature Party** comprises the group of elected members representing that political party within a specific legislative house (Parliament or State Assembly).
- **Judicial Directives & Provisions:** In the *Subhash Desai v. Governor of Maharashtra (2023)* case, the Supreme Court re-emphasized that the political party and the legislature party are distinct entities. The Court held that the authority to issue whips and choose leaders vests inherently in the political party, meaning a rebel faction of a legislature party cannot unilaterally declare itself the original party or orchestrate a merger without the parent organization's structural consent.





Conclusion

The strategic bypass of using minor, registered unrecognized parties to house breakaway factions exposes loopholes in the Tenth Schedule. To safeguard the electorate's mandate, structural amendments are required to clarify that legislative numerical strength cannot stand independent of the organizational political party.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Indian Constitution—significant provisions and basic structure; structural issues and loopholes within the Tenth Schedule; role of the Speaker; and evolution of the anti-defection jurisprudence via landmark Supreme Court judgments.

7. Sustainable Urban Water Management: Five Key Solutions for Indian Cities

- **The Urban Crisis Matrix:** Chronic summer water emergencies across major metros (Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru) stem from rapid urban growth, systemic over-reliance on distant water sources, depletion of internal buffers (lakes, tanks), and heavy groundwater exploitation.
- **Emergency Infrastructure Planning:** Cities require public, data-driven emergency water plans identifying vulnerable wards and prioritizing public utility distribution. Treating operational metrics as transparent public information minimizes community grievances.
- **Mitigating Distribution Loss:** Rather than prioritizing capital-intensive new source creation, municipalities must execute time-bound leak detection programs. In Indian systems, structural pipeline leaks cause up to 30% of supply loss; reclaiming this water mirrors finding a new local source.
- **Decentralized Demand Management:** Public infrastructure, commercial complexes, and Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) must implement immediate internal audits, enforce consumption norms, reduce non-essential use during peak seasons, and verify tanker origins.
- **Integrated Quality and Wastewater Reuse:** Severe distribution shortages worsen public health risks via pipeline cross-contamination. Cities must combine rapid field water-quality testing with targeted upgrades to existing sewage treatment plants (aeration, desludging) to safely augment groundwater and recycle used-water.
- **Key Concept Definitions:** **Non-Revenue Water (NRW)** represents water produced and cleaned for distribution that is lost through physical pipeline leaks, theft, or billing errors before reaching consumers. **Sewage Exfiltration** is the leakage of untreated wastewater out of damaged sewer pipes into surrounding soil, severely contaminating nearby freshwater aquifers.
- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions:** Under **Schedule 7 (State List, Item 17)**, Water Supply and Sanitation is a State responsibility, while municipal bodies execute daily distribution as mandated by the **74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992**. Environmentally, **Section 24 of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974** prohibits the discharge of untreated pollutants into water bodies, providing statutory backing for wastewater treatment compliance.





Conclusion

Treating urban water scarcity as a recurring seasonal anomaly delays vital systemic reform. Transitioning from supply-side expansion to circular water economics—via distribution efficiency, aggressive recycling, and aquifer rejuvenation—is fundamental to building climate-resilient Indian cities.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Urban governance, performance of Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), civic public service delivery, and decentralized implementation under the 74th Amendment.
- **GS Paper III (Infrastructure & Environment):** Water resource management, sustainable urban planning, climate change adaptation strategies, and mitigating environmental degradation.

8. Kerala's Disease Outbreak Calendar: A Predictive Model for Public Health

- **Core Initiative:** The Kerala government has announced the creation of a first-of-its-kind "outbreak calendar" designed to map the precise seasonal and regional timelines of communicable and zoonotic disease surges across the state.
- **Epidemiological Variations:** Data shows clear geographic and temporal clusters; for instance, highly lethal Nipah virus cases consistently surface in the Perambra region of Kozhikode between May and September. Conversely, specific bacterial infections like shigellosis show highly uneven distribution, staying absent in districts like Palakkad despite rising statewide trends.
- **Predictive Governance Shift:** By institutionalizing an outbreak calendar alongside a newly formed high-powered panel on communicable diseases, the state aims to transition from a reactive crisis response to an advanced predictive health framework, optimizing the pre-positioning of medical resources.
- **Key Concept Definitions:** **Outbreak Calendar** is a spatial-temporal data tool that tracks historical occurrence patterns of pathogens to accurately forecast future seasonal outbreaks. **Shigellosis** is a highly contagious bacterial gastrointestinal infection caused by the *Shigella* pathogen, spreading primarily through contaminated food and water.
- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions:** Under the Constitution of India, **Public Health and Sanitation** is a state subject under **Entry 6 of the State List (Seventh Schedule)**. Additionally, the **Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897** vests state governments with statutory powers to prescribe temporary regulations, enforce localized surveillance, and restrict public movement to prevent the spread of dangerous epidemic diseases.



Conclusion

Kerala's shift toward data-driven, localized disease forecasting serves as a structural template for pandemic preparedness. Unlocking the underlying ecological and climate drivers behind pathogen seasonality will be key to strengthening regional biosecurity and reducing public health vulnerabilities.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Social Sector):** Issues relating to the development and management of the Social Sector/Services relating to Health; governance strategies in epidemic mitigation.
- **GS Paper III (Science & Technology):** Public health challenges, zoonotic spillover (Nipah virus), microbiology, and data analytics applications in epidemiological tracking.

9. IORA Evaluates Canada's Observer Status Amid Maritime Realignment

- **Context of Application:** Canada's official application to become a Dialogue Partner (observer status) is under formal evaluation at the 28th meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) held in New Delhi.
- **Strategic Capabilities:** Member states stand to benefit significantly from Canada's inclusion due to its vast coastal zones and extensive technical expertise in critical maritime domains, including maritime safety, regional connectivity, and transnational security infrastructure.
- **Geopolitical Stabilizers:** The IORA leadership welcomed the potential easing of geopolitical friction via a projected US-Iran peace agreement, aimed at resolving long-standing disruptions and security threats across the strategic maritime choke point of the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Climate and Disaster Priorities:** Strengthening localized disaster response and climate change mitigation frameworks remains a primary focus for IORA, given that the adverse impacts of global warming fall disproportionately on vulnerable littoral and island nations within the Indian Ocean.
- **Key Concept Definitions:** **Dialogue Partners** are sovereign states outside the immediate Indian Ocean Rim region that maintain strong strategic ties with IORA, contributing specialized collaboration to its core pillars. **Choke Point** refers to a narrow, strategic maritime passage (like the Strait of Hormuz) whose blockage can severely disrupt global shipping lanes and energy supply chains.
- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions:** Under **Article 51(c)** of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), India is committed to fostering respect for international law and treaty obligations in maritime conduct. Nationally, these geopolitical engagements align closely with India's **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)** doctrine and the **MAHASAGAR** initiative, which emphasize comprehensive, rules-based cooperative security architecture across the Indian Ocean.

Conclusion

Evaluating Canada's integration into IORA highlights a transition toward extra-regional maritime partnerships to secure vital shipping lanes. For IORA, balancing middle-power capabilities with localized ecological defense mechanisms will be central to building long-term climate and economic resilience.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's strategic interests; institutional architecture of IORA and the evolving role of dialogue partners.
- **GS Paper III (Security & Environment):** Maritime security challenges, safeguarding international choke points, disaster risk reduction, and managing the economic fallout of climate vulnerabilities in coastal zones.



10. Exercise Pitch Black 2026: Enhancing Indo-Pacific Interoperability

- **Multinational Air Combat Drill:** The Indian Air Force (IAF) will participate in Exercise Pitch Black 2026, the Royal Australian Air Force's (RAAF) premier and largest biennial multinational air combat exercise, hosted in Australia's Northern Territory from July 20 to August 7, 2026.
- **Scale of Mobilization:** The 2026 iteration brings together over 100 aircraft and military personnel from 19 allied and partner nations. It offers a high-end combat environment to practice Large Force Employment (LFE) warfare, refine complex air combat tactics, and improve collective preparedness.
- **Strategic Indo-Pacific Alignment:** Announced by the Australian High Commissioner to India, the exercise underscores the deepening defence ties under the India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, serving as a critical platform to maintain structural stability and security across the Indo-Pacific corridor.
- **Historical Progression:** India's engagement has scaled up progressively since its debut in 2018. While previous editions (2022 and 2024) saw the deployment of Su-30MKI multirole fighters alongside support assets like C-17 Globemasters and Il-78 refuellers, the 2026 edition positions the IAF to field its advanced Rafale fighter jets.
- **Key Concept Definitions:** **Interoperability** is the capacity of distinct military branches or diverse allied nations to operate cohesively using compatible communication infrastructure, logistics, and joint tactical doctrines. **Large Force Employment (LFE)** involves complex, multi-aircraft tactical scenarios designed to integrate different platform types in realistic, high-threat simulated combat.
- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions:** Under **Article 246 (Seventh Schedule, Union List, Item 1 and Item 2)**, the Union government holds absolute authority over National Defence and the Armed Forces, providing the sovereign mandate for overseas deployments. These bilateral milestones operate under the statutory **India-Australia Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA)**, which facilitates seamless reciprocal access to military bases and replenishment services.



Conclusion

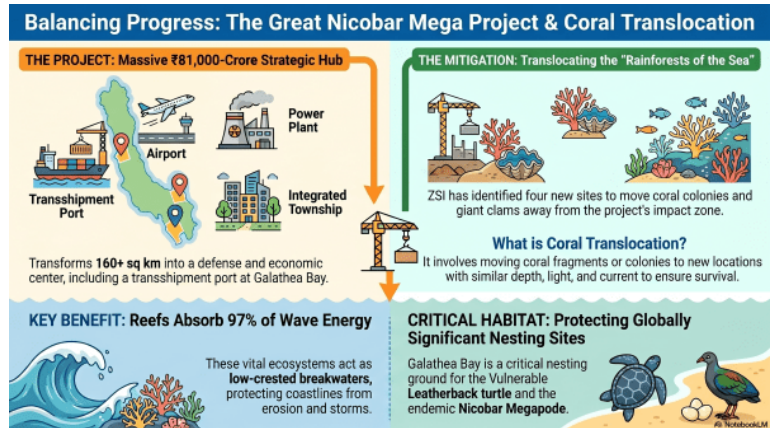
Exercise Pitch Black 2026 reflects India's proactive, rules-based geopolitical footprint in the Indo-Pacific. By testing transoceanic deployment, long-range aerial refuelling, and advanced force integration, the IAF sharpens its operational readiness while contributing to collective deterrence against unilateral maritime or airspace disruptions.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India; strategic and defence cooperation frameworks within the Quad architecture and Indo-Pacific geography.
- **GS Paper III (Security & Defence):** Joint military exercises, modernization of the Indian Armed Forces, threat perception, and enhancing long-range operational capabilities in global theatres.

11. Great Nicobar Project: Strategic Development and Coral Translocation

- Project and Ecological Conflict:** The Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) is seeking statutory clearances to translocate 16,150 coral colonies from the Galathea Bay transshipment port site, a critical component of the Rs 81,000 crore Great Nicobar Island (GNI) mega project.
- Mitigation Mandate:** Translocation of these marine ecosystems is a non-negotiable prerequisite under the environmental clearance granted to the project, aimed at minimizing the destructive impacts of capital dredging and localized underwater operations.
- Technical and Survivability Barriers:** Independent marine biologists label the relocation of entire mature colonies as near-impossible due to structural complexities. While ZSI points to a 68% to 85% success rate in the Gulf of Kutch, experts warn that Galathea Bay is dominated by massive boulder corals (*Porites* and *Favia*), which are highly vulnerable to fragmentation.
- Sedimentation Risk:** ZSI is currently monitoring sediment load using sediment traps. Capital dredging induces high turbidity, suspending particles in the water column that block sunlight, choke coral polyps, and severely impede photosynthetic activities essential for reef survival.
- Key Concept Definitions:** **Coral Translocation** is the deliberate physical relocation of living coral colonies or fragments from a threatened developmental site to a secure, ecologically hospitable recipient habitat. **Capital Dredging** refers to the intensive underwater excavation of sediments to deepen navigation channels, harbors, or port berths to allow the passage of large container vessels.
- Constitutional & Legal Provisions:** Under **Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972**, corals are accorded the highest level of statutory protection, making their deliberate harm or unapproved relocation a major legal offense. Administratively, the project falls under the regulatory oversight of the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** and requires institutional clearance from the Wildlife Division of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) under the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.



Conclusion

The coral translocation plan at Galathea Bay highlights the persistent friction between high-investment infrastructure development and ecological conservation. Success hinges entirely on rigorous, science-backed execution, post-translocation monitoring, and strictly minimizing turbidity to preserve the rich marine biodiversity of the Andaman and Nicobar eco-sensitive zone.

UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper III (Environment & Ecology):** Marine biodiversity, coral reef ecosystems, bleaching and sedimentation threats, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) processes, and infrastructure development versus ecological conservation trade-offs.
- GS Paper II (Governance & Institutions):** Evolving statutory roles and regulatory jurisdiction of the ZSI, NGT, and MoEF&CC in evaluating mega-development clearances.



12. Child Safety on Social Media: Global Bans and India's Evolving Policy

- **Global Policy Shift:** Countries like Australia and the UK are introducing strict legislative bans or age-limits (e.g., barring children under 16 from creating accounts) to tackle the mental health risks, sleep disruptions, and addictive designs associated with early social media exposure.
- **India's Tiered Regulatory Strategy:** Moving away from blanket bans, the Union government is considering a nuanced, age-graded approach. This includes creating distinct regulatory parameters for kids aged 8–12, 12–16, and 16–18 years to balance digital access with protective safeguards.
- **State-Level Legislative Initiatives:** Individual states are driving immediate restrictions. Karnataka announced a proposal to ban social media for children under 16 in its 2026-27 Budget, Andhra Pradesh aims to restrict under-13 access within 90 days, while Goa and a separate draft policy on 'Responsible Digital Use Among Students' suggest capping screen time and introducing Aadhaar-enabled age verification.
- **Algorithmic Mechanics of Engagement:** The core challenge stems from addictive structural features built into platforms—such as infinite scroll, automated autoplay, and AI-powered notification systems—which bypass developing self-control and exploit behavioral vulnerabilities.
- **Key Concept Definitions:** **Infinite Scroll** is a design technique that continuously loads content as the user scrolls down, eliminating natural psychological stopping points to maximize user retention. **Network Effects** refer to a phenomenon where a platform becomes exponentially more valuable to its users as more people join, creating immense peer pressure for adolescents to remain online.
- **Constitutional & Legal Provisions:** Under **Article 21** of the Constitution, the Right to Privacy is protected as an integral part of the Right to Life and Personal Liberty. The primary statutory framework is the **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023**, which under **Section 9** mandates that data fiduciaries must obtain verifiable parental consent before processing any personal data of a child, explicitly prohibiting tracking, behavioral monitoring, or targeted advertising directed at children.

Conclusion

Relying on user-driven warning labels or parental vigilance is insufficient against sophisticated, engagement-maximizing algorithms. Creating a safer digital ecosystem for minors requires platform-level design alterations, strict age-gating mechanisms, and a harmonized national legislative framework that treats children as distinct digital citizens.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Social Justice & Governance):** Mechanisms, laws, institutions, and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections (children); state-level versus central public policy coordination.
- **GS Paper III (Internal Security & Technology):** Cyber safety, data privacy, the sociological impact of AI algorithms, and the regulatory challenges of managing global Big Tech intermediaries.