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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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1. GDP Growth Outlook Brightens Amid Easing Iran War Tensions

Contextual Summary

- **Growth Upgrade:** Goldman Sachs upgraded India's CY2026 GDP growth forecast to **6.8%**, following a formal US-Iran peace agreement that eased West Asia geopolitical tensions.
- **Resilient Performance:** India's real GDP expanded by **7.8%** year-on-year in Q1 CY2026, surpassing initial market expectations by 50 basis points due to robust domestic fundamentals.
- **Growth Drivers:** The stronger-than-expected economic performance was primarily driven by resilient investment activity and robust service sector performance.
- **Investment Surge:** Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) hit a six-quarter high of **10.8%** year-on-year, supported by healthy automobile production and strong capital imports.
- **Exogenous Shock Mitigation:** Government measures insulated consumers from direct energy shocks, limiting the pass-through of volatile global fuel costs to the domestic economy.
- **Volatility Caution:** Economists emphasize that while lower crude prices and eased supply constraints mitigate downside risks, growth remains sensitive to global macroeconomic volatility.

Key Definitions

- **Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF):** A macroeconomic indicator measuring net increase in physical assets (infrastructure, machinery) within an economy, serving as a proxy for investment activity.
- **Exogenous Shocks:** Unexpected external economic events (e.g., geopolitical conflicts, global supply chain disruptions) that originate outside the domestic economy but significantly impact its performance.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 112 (Annual Financial Statement):** External energy shocks impact fiscal deficits and government capital expenditure, which are managed via the Union Budget under this Article.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003:** Mandates fiscal discipline; exogenous shocks like the West Asia crisis test the statutory targets for fiscal and revenue deficit management.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Indian Economy):** Crucial for topics related to mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment. Highlights the vulnerability of India's macroeconomic stability (inflation, current account deficit) to global energy supply chains and geopolitical risks.

Conclusion

India's growth resilience underscores strong structural fundamentals capable of withstanding exogenous shocks. However, long-term stability requires continuous diversification of energy imports and sustained domestic capital formation to buffer against persistent global geopolitical volatility.





2. Anti-Dumping Probe on Steel Imports from China, Japan, and Russia

Contextual Summary

- **Investigation Initiated:** The Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) has launched an anti-dumping investigation into hot-rolled flat steel products imported from China, Japan, and Russia.
- **Industry Grievance:** Major domestic steelmakers (JSW Steel, Jindal Steel, Tata Steel, and SAIL) filed the application, alleging that a surge of cheap imports has caused severe material injury to local manufacturing.
- **Price Undercutting:** The notification notes that the volume of these imports increased significantly in absolute terms, undercutting, suppressing, and depressing domestic steel prices.
- **Financial Impact:** Despite maintaining high domestic sales volumes, local steel manufacturers reported accumulated inventories, operational losses, and declining returns on capital investments.
- **Demand for Retrospective Duty:** The domestic industry has requested the retrospective imposition of anti-dumping duties, citing a historical pattern of predatory pricing that threatens irreparable harm if left unchecked.

Key Definitions

- **Anti-Dumping Duty (ADD):** A protectionist tariff imposed by a domestic government on foreign imports that it believes are priced below fair market value to prevent unfair competition.
- **Material Injury:** A substantial and demonstrable adverse impact on the financial and operational health (such as profits, output, or market share) of a domestic industry caused by dumped goods.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Customs Tariff Act, 1975 (Section 9A):** Empowers the Central Government to impose anti-dumping duties upon the determination of dumping and material injury by the investigating authority.
- **Anti-Dumping Rules, 1995:** Provides the statutory framework and procedural guidelines for the DGTR to conduct investigations, calculate dumping margins, and recommend duties.
- **Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR):** The apex national body under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry responsible for administering all trade remedial measures, including anti-dumping, countervailing duties, and safeguard measures.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Indian Economy & Industrial Policy):** Relates to issues concerning mobilization of resources, growth, and government policies affecting the manufacturing sector. It highlights India's balancing act between protecting domestic core industries (steel) and adhering to World Trade Organization (WTO) guidelines on free trade and fair competition.

Conclusion

The probe reflects India's proactive stance in shielding strategic core sectors from predatory trade practices. While ensuring a level playing field for domestic steel giants is essential for industrial self-reliance, the government must balance trade remedies with the cost concerns of downstream steel-consuming sectors to sustain overall economic momentum.



3. Revamp of Rural Job Scheme: Enhancing Accessibility for Divyangjan

Contextual Summary

- **New Inclusive Vertical:** The government is introducing a specialized vertical for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) under the VB-GRAM G scheme starting July 1, 2026.
- **Differentiated Schedule of Rates:** A tailored Schedule of Rates (SoR) will align productivity norms with individual capacities, guaranteeing full daily wages (₹241-400) without requiring rigid working hours.
- **Shift in Work Profile:** Eligible workers will be transitioned away from intensive manual labor toward supervisory, support, and livelihood-oriented roles closer to their residences.
- **Target Population:** According to the 2011 Census, India has nearly 26.8 million PwDs, with almost 70% residing in rural areas, necessitating targeted socio-economic intervention.
- **Institutional Tracking:** Special Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards will be issued to streamline identification, track statutory entitlements, and systematically allocate appropriate tasks.
- **Financial Allocation:** The Centre has proposed a total allocation of ₹1.51 trillion for VB-GRAM G in FY27, bolstering sustainable asset creation like rural markets and skill centers.

Key Definitions

- **Schedule of Rates (SoR):** A comprehensive matrix detailing the government-approved payment rates for specific quantities of work or industrial output.
- **VB-GRAM G:** A rural infrastructure and employment scheme aligned with the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision, integrating wage employment with asset creation.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 41 (DPSP):** Directs the State to secure the right to work and public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness, and disablement.
- **Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016:** Guarantees non-discrimination, equal opportunity, and reasonable accommodation for PwDs in all government-led employment initiatives.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II & III (Social Justice & Indian Economy):** Relevant to welfare schemes for vulnerable sections and inclusive growth. It highlights the paradigm shift from basic manual relief work to dignified, capacity-linked economic empowerment in the rural ecosystem.

Conclusion

The restructuring of VB-GRAM G marks a progressive leap toward rural financial equity. However, its long-term success hinges on overcoming implementation bottlenecks such as accurate rural identification and localized work planning. Prioritizing disabled-friendly asset creation can transform safety nets into sustainable instruments of social empowerment.



4. Spurious Oxytocin Concerns and Maternal Safety Investigations

Contextual Summary

- **Central Intervention:** The Union Health Ministry has sought a comprehensive report from the Rajasthan government following maternal deaths and severe post-caesarean complications across multiple state-run hospitals.
- **Global Health Alert:** The World Health Organization (WHO) intervened to request information from India to determine whether the risk of spurious oxytocin is localized or indicates a widespread supply-chain vulnerability.
- **Regulatory Enforcement:** Following the fatalities, the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) and state authorities cancelled the licenses of a Kota-based distributor and two manufacturing units in Punjab.
- **Clinical Trigger:** The affected patients suffered from severe postpartum hemorrhage (excessive blood loss), pointing directly toward sub-standard or counterfeit uterine-contracting medications.
- **Public Health Risk:** The probe focuses on standardizing the pharmaceutical supply chain to eliminate counterfeit life-saving drugs from public health distribution networks.

Key Definitions

- **Oxytocin:** A critical synthetic hormone administered during childbirth to induce labor, stimulate uterine contractions, and prevent severe postpartum hemorrhage.
- **Spurious Drugs:** Medications that are deliberately and fraudulently mislabeled with respect to identity, composition, or source, posing grave threats to patient safety.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21:** Encompasses the right to health and safe medical treatment as an integral component of the fundamental Right to Life.
- **Article 47 (DPSP):** Directs the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living, and to improve public health as a primary duty.
- **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940:** Regulates the import, manufacture, distribution, and sale of drugs; Section 17B defines and penalizes the manufacturing of spurious drugs.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Public Health):** Relevant to government policies, interventions for health sector development, and the regulatory efficacy of bodies like the CDSCO. It underlines structural challenges in maternal healthcare delivery, drug procurement corruption, and federal-global healthcare coordination.

Conclusion

The maternal casualties in Rajasthan expose critical gaps in local drug quality surveillance. Strengthening the punitive mechanisms under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act and implementing rigorous batch-testing protocols are essential to protect maternal health and uphold India's reputation as a reliable pharmaceutical manufacturing hub.





5. Cyberspace and Border Vulnerabilities in Drug Trafficking: NCB Report

Contextual Summary

- **Digital Trafficking Shift:** The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) Annual Report highlights that encrypted messaging apps like Telegram, WhatsApp, and Signal have emerged as primary channels for global and domestic drug trafficking.
- **Telegram as a Key Hub:** Telegram has specifically become a prominent drug-advertising platform, utilizing public channels to broadcast product listings, pricing, and delivery logistics to vast subscriber bases.
- **Departure from Darknet:** Unlike traditional darknet marketplaces that require specialized software, encrypted messaging apps offer illicit traders a more accessible, user-friendly interface with broad public reach.
- **Geopolitical Border Concerns:** The report flags the Myanmar transit route as a critical geopolitical vulnerability, facilitating the illicit inflow of narcotics into India's northeastern corridor.
- **Institutional Response:** The findings were highlighted by the Union Home Minister at the apex-level meeting of the Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) to overhaul multi-agency enforcement strategies.

Key Definitions

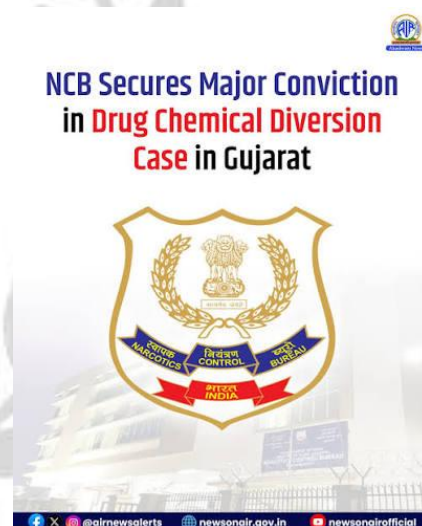
- **Encrypted Messaging Platforms:** Applications using cryptographic protocols to secure communications, ensuring that data can only be read by the sender and the designated recipients.
- **Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD):** A multi-tiered mechanism established in India to ensure effective coordination among central and state enforcement agencies fighting drug trafficking.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 47 (DPSP):** Explicitly directs the State to endeavor to bring about the prohibition of the consumption, except for medicinal purposes, of intoxicating drinks and of drugs which are injurious to health.
- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985:** The primary statutory framework penalizing the cultivation, manufacture, possession, sale, and transport of illicit narcotics.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Section 69A governs the blocking of public access to information or channels that threaten national security, public order, or facilitate systemic criminal offenses.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Internal Security & Cyber Security):** Highly relevant to topics covering role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security, challenges to internal security through communication networks, and the nexus between organized crime and terrorism. It showcases how technology lowers operational barriers for transnational drug syndicates.





Conclusion

The convergence of end-to-end encryption with cross-border supply chains presents a sophisticated national security threat. Combating this digital paradigm requires proactive legislative reforms under the IT Act, stringent intermediary liabilities for messaging platforms, and enhanced international cooperation along the Golden Triangle border networks.

6. Demographic Divergence: Delimitation, Tax Devolution, and Fertility Challenges

Contextual Summary

- **Demographic Projections:** UN Population Division data indicates India's population will likely peak at 170 crore in 2062 and decline thereafter, with the current national Total Fertility Rate (TFR) standing at 1.9.
- **Regional Disparities:** Severe demographic divergence exists between high-fertility northern states like Bihar (TFR 2.9) and Uttar Pradesh (TFR 2.6), and southern states operating well below the replacement level.
- **The Delimitation Dilemma:** Declining fertility in southern states raises political concerns regarding a potential loss of parliamentary representation during future seat realignments based on population.
- **Incentive Policies Pitfalls:** States like Andhra Pradesh have introduced financial and welfare incentives to boost birth rates, but historical global precedents show that one-off material incentives rarely reverse structural demographic declines.
- **Persistent Sex Ratio Distortion:** Despite gradual improvements (918 in 2022-24 from 907 in 2018-20), India faces a persistent "girl deficit" at birth, remaining far below the natural biological standard of 955.
- **Policy Recommendation:** The authors argue against raising fertility rates; instead, they advocate for decoupling political representation and fiscal devolution from pure population metrics to penalize or reward states equitably.



Key Definitions

- **Total Fertility Rate (TFR):** The average number of children that would be born to a woman over her lifetime if she were to experience the exact current age-specific fertility rates.
- **Replacement Level Fertility:** The specific TFR (typically 2.1) at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next without migration.
- **Delimitation:** The statutory act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and state assembly seats to represent changes in population over time.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 82 & 81:** Governance framework for the allocation of Lok Sabha seats to states. The 84th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2001 froze this allocation based on the 1971 census until the first census taken after 2026.



- **Article 280:** Mandates the Finance Commission to recommend the distribution of tax revenues between the Union and States, utilizing a mix of demographic performance and income distance to balance equity.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I & II (Population Dynamics & Federalism):** Directly addresses critical themes of population and associated issues, distribution of power, and fiscal federalism challenges. It highlights how asymmetric regional development affects constitutional arrangements.

Conclusion

Artificially raising fertility rates is an inefficient solution to structural federal anxieties. The long-term resolution of India's demographic friction lies in institutional reforms that safeguard the political clout of demographically successful states while deploying targeted women's empowerment initiatives to accelerate stabilization in high-fertility regions.

7. Israel-Lebanon Framework Peace Agreement: Geopolitical Realignment

Contextual Summary

- **Trilateral Agreement Inked:** Israel and Lebanon have signed a milestone framework agreement in Washington, brokered by the United States, to permanently end hostilities between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah militant group.
- **Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity:** Signed by Lebanese Ambassador Nada Moawad and Israeli Ambassador Yechiel Leiter, the agreement aims to restore Lebanese state sovereignty and territorial integrity over southern regions.
- **Strategic Realignments:** The trilateral, performance-based agreement emphasizes a significant shift in regional dynamics, aiming to structurally exclude external Iranian and Hezbollah proxies from the border governance matrix.
- **Troop Withdrawal Negotiations:** The diplomatic talks included explicit proposals for Israeli forces to gradually hand over occupied territories in southern Lebanon to the formal Lebanese military.
- **Persistent Ground Instability:** Despite the landmark framework, sporadic localized violence, evacuation orders, and low-intensity military strikes persist along the volatile border zones.
- **Socio-Economic Rebound:** The cessation of active warfare is expected to alleviate massive displacement crises, which have uprooted over a million civilians and caused severe infrastructure casualties.



Key Definitions

- **Framework Agreement:** A preliminary, legally non-binding or semi-binding pact between nations that outlines the fundamental principles, objectives, and structures for subsequent formal treaties.



- **Performance-Based Agreement:** A diplomatic or legal contract where long-term compliance, concessions, or resource disbursements are strictly contingent upon the verifiable fulfillment of specific target benchmarks.

Legal & Constitutional Dimensions

- **Article 51 of the UN Charter:** Recognizes the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member of the United Nations, a key legal justification used during the preceding cross-border conflict.
- **UN Security Council Resolution 1701:** The historic international legal baseline for southern Lebanon, which mandates the complete disarmament of all armed groups outside the official Lebanese state and the exclusive deployment of the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Directly covers bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests. West Asian stability is critically vital to India's energy security, trade routes, and the safety of the massive Indian diaspora residing across the Gulf region.

Conclusion

The US-brokered framework provides a strategic blueprint for de-escalation, but its ultimate success depends on the structural capacity of the formal Lebanese military to secure its borders independently. For India, a sustained peace in West Asia minimizes global energy supply disruptions and stabilizes maritime commercial transit lanes.

8. Global Regulatory Crackdown on Under-16 Social Media Access

Contextual Summary

- **Legislative Overhaul Planned:** Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced that the Australian government plans to strengthen its pioneering legislation banning children under 16 from social media platforms.
- **Compliance Failure:** The intervention follows widespread evidence that the initial ban—which took effect on December 10, 2025 across platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube—has largely failed to deter underage account creation.
- **Empowering the Watchdog:** Discussions focus on reviewing whether the laws are sufficiently robust and ensuring that eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant has the statutory powers necessary for enforcement.
- **Big Tech Liabilities:** Digital giants face steep financial penalties of up to 49.5 million Australian dollars (\$34 million USD) if they fail to take verifiable, reasonable steps to remove underage accounts.
- **Global Domino Effect:** Following Australia's world-first legislative precedent, nations like Britain, Canada, Brazil, and Indonesia have introduced or are actively structuring similar age-based social media restrictions.





- **Public Health Mandate:** Governments are increasingly shifting away from laissez-faire tech policies to combat systemic youth harms, such as algorithmic addiction, targeted cyber-bullying, and excessive screen time.

Key Definitions

- **Age Assurance Technology:** Technical mechanisms (such as biometrics, database verification, or tokenized IDs) used by digital services to estimate or verify a user's chronological age without compromising data privacy.
- **Digital Duty of Care:** A regulatory standard requiring technology platforms to proactively design and operate services in a manner that protects users from preventable and foreseeable systemic harms.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 21 & 39(f) (Indian Context):** While this is an international development, it resonates with India's constitutional mandates where the Right to Life includes a safe childhood, and Directive Principles urge protecting youth from material abandonment.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000 (Section 67):** India's primary legislative framework addressing online child safety, though it currently lacks specific provisions for an outright age-based ban on social media accounts.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II & III (Governance, Social Justice & Cyber Security):** Highly relevant to international regulatory models, government policies affecting vulnerable demographics (children), and statutory bodies. It highlights the shifting global paradigm towards platform accountability and strict intermediary liabilities over user-centric enforcement.

Conclusion

Australia's effort to tighten its social media ban illustrates that legislation alone cannot curb digital harms without precise age verification tech and robust regulatory teeth. As India drafts its Digital India Act, this global precedent highlights the critical necessity of balancing robust tech enforcement with juvenile digital literacy.

9. State-Sponsored Cyber Warfare: The Economic Shock of the Jaguar Land Rover Hack

Contextual Summary

- **Unprecedented Economic Hit:** An advanced ransomware attack on Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) forced a five-week production shutdown, delivering a massive \$2.5 billion blow to the United Kingdom's broader economy.
- **Corporate Financial Damage:** The intrusion, occurring in late August 2025, disrupted industrial manufacturing severely, costing the luxury automotive manufacturer an estimated \$350 million in the 2026 fiscal year.
- **State-Backed Attribution:** While an anonymous collective initially claimed responsibility, joint investigations by UK and US intelligence linked the attack to Russian hackers operating with the tacit assent or backing of the Kremlin.



- **Geopolitical Underpinnings:** Security experts view the hack not as a typical commercial ransom demand, but as a deliberate state-sponsored assault on critical economic infrastructure amid tense bilateral ties between Russia and Britain.
- **Sophisticated Malware Delivery:** The adversaries deployed a novel ransomware strain built on unique encryption algorithms, bypassing traditional cyber defense perimeters and causing a highly coordinated industrial paralysis.

Key Definitions

- **Ransomware:** A category of malicious software (malware) engineered to block access to a computer system or encrypt its data until a specified financial sum is paid to the perpetrators.
- **Critical Information Infrastructure (CII):** Computer resources, systems, or networks whose incapacitation or destruction would have a debilitating impact on national security, economy, or public health.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Section 66F of the Information Technology Act, 2000 (Indian Context):** Outlines punitive measures for cyber terrorism, covering acts intended to threaten the unity, integrity, security, or sovereignty of India by disrupting critical electronic systems.
- **National Cyber Security Policy, 2013:** A framework designed to build a secure computing environment and protect critical information infrastructure from state-sponsored and non-state cyber hostilities.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Internal Security & Cyber Security):** Highly relevant to security challenges concerning state-sponsored cyber warfare, critical infrastructure protection, and the socio-economic vulnerabilities of interconnected supply chains. It underscores how digitised core industries can be weaponized in modern asymmetric proxy conflicts.



Conclusion

The catastrophic cyber assault on Britain's manufacturing sector demonstrates that modern industrial security is inseparable from national defense. Safeguarding corporate ecosystems against sophisticated, state-aligned digital syndicates requires a shift from passive, reactive firewalls toward an aggressive, intelligence-led zero-trust security architecture.

10. India-Seychelles Bilateral Relations: Strategic Partnership and Diaspora Power

Contextual Summary

- **Historical Milestone:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the 50th Independence Day celebrations of Seychelles as the Guest of Honour, marking 50 years of robust bilateral diplomatic ties established in 1976.
- **Demographic Dividend:** Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) constitute nearly 5% of Seychelles' total population of 120,000, playing a dominant role in the island's trading, construction, and professional sectors.



- **Maritime Security Hub:** Seychelles serves as a critical maritime security partner for India in the Western Indian Ocean, helping counter regional maritime threats such as seaborne terrorism, piracy, and illegal fishing.
- **Geopolitical Counterweight:** Strategically located near Africa, Asia, and the Middle East, the island nation is central to India's Sagar strategy and serves as a crucial geostrategic balancer against China's expanding footprints.
- **Development Assistance:** India extended a new Special Economic Package of \$175 million alongside significant Lines of Credit (LoC) targeting localized infrastructural growth, healthcare advancements, and capacity-building initiatives.
- **Medical Tourism:** The bilateral relationship features structured institutional tie-ups connecting Seychelles hospitals with advanced medical facilities in Indian cities like Chennai, positioning India as a premier medical tourism destination.



Key Definitions

- **Vision MAHASAGAR:** India's institutional framework signifying "Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions", focusing on collective maritime security and economic cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.
- **Line of Credit (LoC):** A development assistance mechanism where a donor country provides soft loans on concessional terms to a recipient country to purchase goods, services, and execute infrastructure projects.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 51 (DPSP):** Instructs the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honourable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law.
- **Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award:** The highest honour conferred by the Government of India on overseas Indians (NRIs/PIOs) to recognize their significant contributions to building bilateral partnerships, awarded previously to notable Seychellois leaders of Indian descent.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Covers India and its neighborhood relations, bilateral agreements involving India, and policies affecting India's interests. It underlines the strategic transition from pure cultural diplomacy to hard maritime security architecture under the "Security and Growth for All in the Region" (SAGAR) framework.

Conclusion

The deepening alignment between New Delhi and Victoria showcases how diaspora-driven diplomacy can seamlessly transition into a formidable maritime partnership. For India, maintaining an active, collaborative presence in Seychelles is imperative to securing the primary choke points of the Western Indian Ocean and ensuring an open, rule-based maritime domain.



11. High Court Ruling on Panchayati Raj Tenure and Local Governance in Uttar Pradesh

Contextual Summary

- **Judicial Intervention:** The Allahabad High Court ruled that outgoing Gram Pradhans (village heads) cannot be permitted to continue serving as administrative heads after completing their five-year statutory term.
- **Overturning State Executive Order:** The judgment explicitly challenged a Uttar Pradesh government order that had designated existing pradhans as ad-hoc administrators following the expiration of their official tenure.
- **Timeline Directive:** The High Court directed the state executive to clarify and specify a rigid, non-arbitrary timeframe for conducting long-delayed panchayat elections across the state.
- **Political Contestation:** The ruling sparked intensive regional political debates, with opposition leaders welcoming the judicial check on executive power and highlighting complications regarding pending contractor bill settlements during the interim period.
- **Reason for Delay:** The state administration justified the delayed poll cycle by citing the ongoing work of a dedicated commission appointed to determine seat reservations under the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category.
- **Electoral Order Mandate:** The original petition requested the state judiciary to instruct the State Election Commission to place a comprehensive, multi-tier poll schedule on official record to avoid a local governance vacuum.



Key Definitions

- **Gram Pradhan:** An elected representative acting as the executive head of a Gram Panchayat, responsible for village-level administration, infrastructure implementation, and local welfare delivery.
- **Interim Administrator:** A designated public official or ad-hoc representative appointed by the executive branch to run local administrative bodies temporarily when elections are delayed.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 243E:** Explicitly mandates that the duration of every Panchayat shall continue for five years from the date appointed for its first meeting and no longer, making a timely election mandatory before expiration.
- **Article 243K:** Vests the superintendence, direction, and control of the preparation of electoral rolls for, and the conduct of, all elections to the Panchayats in a dedicated State Election Commission.
- **73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992:** Established the institutional bedrock for democratic decentralization in India, creating a mandatory three-tier structure with fixed tenures for rural local bodies.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity and Governance):** Highly pertinent to topics relating to functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, challenges pertaining to the federal structure, and devolution of powers and finances up to local levels. It underscores the judiciary's role in enforcing democratic continuity and preventing executive overreach in grassroots governance systems.

Conclusion

The Allahabad High Court's ruling reinforces the constitutional sanctity of local self-government institutions. Delaying local elections under administrative pretexts undermines decentralization; hence, balancing socio-political obligations like OBC reservations with statutory timelines is vital to keeping rural democratic systems functioning efficiently.

12. Re-Auction of Ramagiri Gold Blocks: Strategic Mineral Exploitation in Andhra Pradesh

Contextual Summary

- **Auction Re-initiation:** The Andhra Pradesh Mines Department is preparing to re-auction the Ramagiri North and Ramagiri South Gold Blocks located in the Ananthapuramu district of the Rayalaseema region.
- **Geographical Matrix:** The two core gold-bearing blocks span a total area of 2000 hectares, comprising approximately 1000 hectares each across the northern and southern sectors of Ramagiri mandal.
- **Composite Licensing:** The mineral blocks are being offered under a composite license (CL) framework and have undergone G4-level reconnaissance exploration managed by the Mineral Exploration, Research and Innovation Trust (MERIT).
- **Historical Exploitation:** The Ramagiri Gold Field has an ancient mining heritage, with modern commercial operations running between 1905 and 1925, generating significant yields from the Chennabhavi and Jibutil mines.
- **Institutional Lineage:** The region previously operated under the public sector ambit of Bharat Gold Mines Limited (BGML)—the central enterprise managing the iconic Kolar Gold Fields (KGF)—before operations ceased in 2001.
- **Geological Significance:** Experts classify the Ramagiri Greenstone Belt as a primary gold-bearing system within the Eastern Dharwar Craton, structurally comparable to the prominent Kolar and Hutti mineral belts.



Key Definitions

- **Composite License (CL):** A seamless institutional permit that combines a preliminary prospecting license with an ultimate mining lease, allowing an enterprise to explore and subsequently extract minerals.
- **G4 Reconnaissance Level:** The initial stage of mineral resource assessment under United Nations International Framework Classification, focusing on identifying mineralisation signs based on regional geological mapping and photogeology.



Constitutional & Legal Provisions

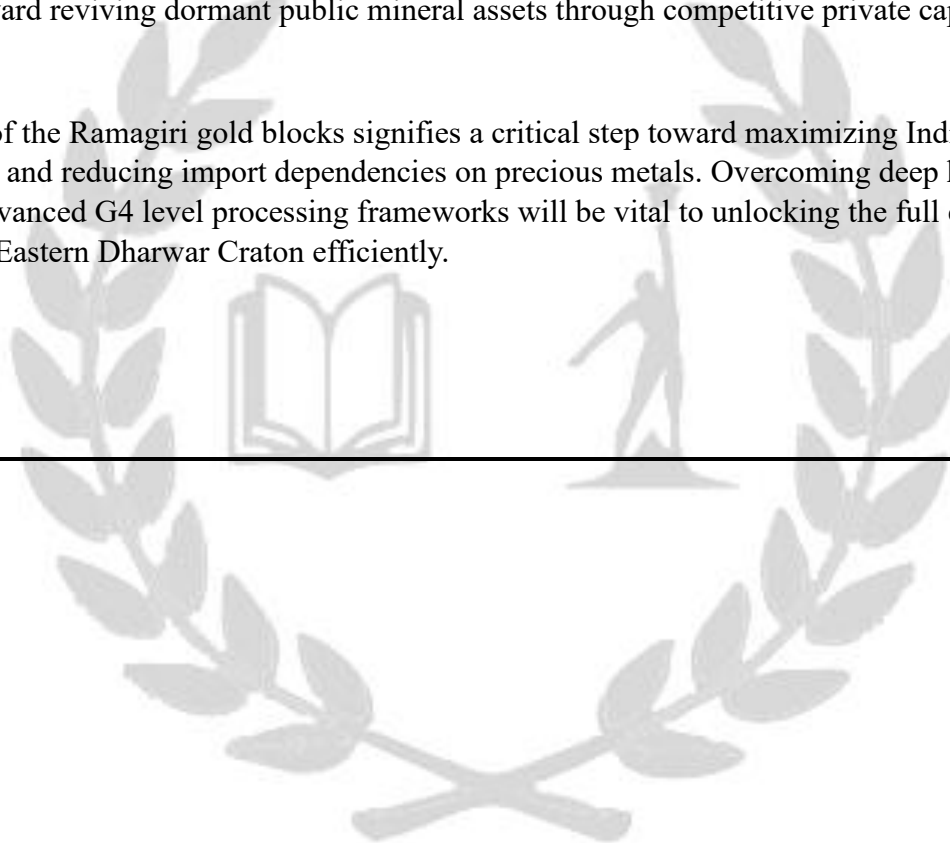
- **Seventh Schedule (Entry 23, State List & Entry 54, Union List):** Vests the regulation of mines and mineral development with the states, subject to central laws governing overarching national resource development.
- **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2023:** Regulates the statutory bidding process, emphasizing the mandatory usage of transparent e-auctions to allocate critical and precious economic mineral assets like gold.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I & III (Geography and Economic Development):** Directly links to the distribution of key natural resources across India and industrial policy changes. It highlights the strategic economic shift toward reviving dormant public mineral assets through competitive private capital participation.

Conclusion

The re-auction of the Ramagiri gold blocks signifies a critical step toward maximizing India's domestic mineral security and reducing import dependencies on precious metals. Overcoming deep historic mining gaps through advanced G4 level processing frameworks will be vital to unlocking the full economic potential of the Eastern Dharwar Craton efficiently.



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