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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. Federalism in Higher Education: Modifications to the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill

Key Highlights & Summary

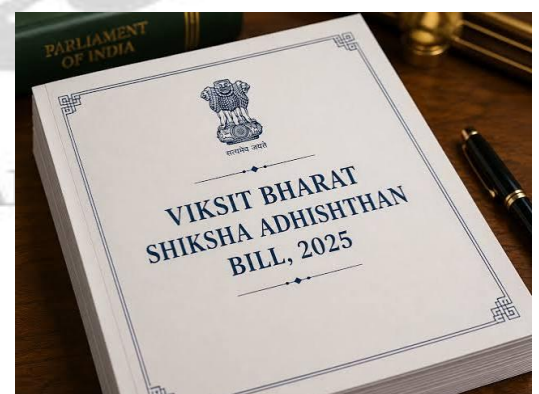
- **Accommodation of State Concerns:** In response to objections regarding the centralization of powers in the proposed Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill (VBSA), 2025, the Union Education Ministry agreed to crucial modifications protecting state autonomy.
- **Mandatory State Concurrence:** The Centre agreed that the proposed central Regulatory Council must secure a No-Objection Certificate (NOC) from the respective State government before taking key decisions regarding colleges affiliated with State universities.
- **Preserving the Affiliation Model:** The amendment addresses critical objections to Clause 11(4), which originally allowed the central Regulatory Council to bypass State universities in deciding whether affiliated colleges could award degrees.
- **Institutional Autonomy for State Universities:** Following recommendations from states like Meghalaya and Andhra Pradesh, State universities will retain the authority to establish constituent colleges, off-campus centres, and multiple campuses under their respective state laws without duplication or procedural delays.
- **Review of Overriding Powers:** The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) recommended a comprehensive review of Clause 47, which originally granted the Central government sweeping powers to suspend or supersede the apex regulatory commission and its secondary councils.

Essential Definitions

- **Cooperative Federalism:** A constitutional and administrative concept where the Central and State governments collaborate to solve common problems and govern effectively, rather than acting in conflict or within strictly separated spheres.
- **Affiliating University Model:** A structural system in higher education where a central university acts as an academic governing body, designing curricula and conducting examinations for a network of subsidiary or constituent colleges.
- **Regulatory Supersession:** The statutory mechanism by which a higher executive authority (such as the Central Government) unilaterally suspends or overrides the powers of an independent regulatory body or sub-national agency.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Seventh Schedule (Concurrent List):** Education, including university education, falls under Entry 25 of List III, giving both Parliament and State Legislatures concurrent powers to legislate, subject to Entry 66 of List I (Coordination and determination of standards).
- **Article 254 (Repugnancy):** Establishes the mechanism to resolve conflicts between Central and State laws over subjects in the Concurrent List, emphasizing that Central legislation generally prevails unless a State law has received Presidential assent.
- **S.R. Bommai v. Union of India (1994):** The Supreme Court held that federalism is a part of the basic structure of the Indian Constitution, meaning the autonomy of States cannot be eroded even through parliamentary legislation.





Conclusion

The Union government's willingness to modify the VBSA Bill, 2025 highlights the enduring strength of cooperative federalism in India's legislative process. By instituting mandatory state concurrence and limiting central superseding powers, the revised framework strikes a vital balance between national standardization and regional institutional autonomy in higher education.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Federal Structure and Devolution of Powers, Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Parliament and State Legislatures (Structure, Functioning, and Conduct of Business), and Government Policies and Interventions.
- **GS Paper III:** Issues relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education and Human Resources.

2. SC to Examine Plea for Recognition of Intersex Persons as Distinct Class

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Supreme Court Notice:** A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant has sought responses from the Centre and State governments regarding a petition seeking a declaration that intersex persons constitute a distinct and identifiable class.
- **Statutory Guidelines Request:** The petition seeks directions for the Union government to frame separate statutory guidelines within six months to provide distinct recognition, protection, and an affirmative support framework for intersex persons.
- **National Medical Protocol:** The petition urges the court to direct the government to constitute a National Medical Protocol Committee for Intersex Care within three months.
- **Inherent Biological Reality:** The plea highlights that being intersex represents an innate biological reality present from birth, separating it from the domain of later-stage personal gender identity formation.
- **Socio-Economic Challenges:** The petitioner highlights that intersex children face severe trauma, forced medical interventions, social abandonment, lack of clear documentation, and exclusion from inheritance, education, and employment frameworks that rely on a strict binary understanding of sex.

Essential Definitions

- **Intersex Persons (Differences of Sex Development - DSD):** Individuals born with congenital variations in sex characteristics, where an infant at birth is medically identifiable as neither distinctly male nor distinctly female due to ambiguous genitalia, atypical chromosomal patterns, gonadal variations, or other intersex conditions. Unlike transgender individuals whose identity may evolve post-puberty or during personal development, intersex conditions are structural, biological realities present at birth.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 14 (Right to Equality):** The strict binary classification of sex in administrative structures denies intersex individuals equal protection before the law and creates structural exclusions.



- **Article 15 (Prohibition of Discrimination):** Protection against discrimination on the grounds of sex applies to all natural variations of biological sex characteristics, including intersex individuals.
- **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty):** Encompasses the right to bodily integrity, personal dignity, and protection against non-consensual, forced medical interventions on infants with ambiguous genitalia.
- **NALSA Judgement (2014) Context:** While the landmark NALSA judgment recognized the right to self-determine gender, the unique structural, medical, and documentation requirements of congenitally born intersex individuals require specific statutory frameworks separate from general transgender laws.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's decision to examine this plea marks a critical shift toward addressing the specific vulnerabilities of intersex persons as a distinct biological class. Standardizing medical protocols and formalizing legal recognition will safeguard their rights to bodily integrity, accurate identification, and equal access to socio-economic opportunities.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population; Mechanisms, laws, institutions, and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Human rights, medical ethics regarding forced interventions on minors, and societal inclusivity.

3. France, Germany Expand Defence Ties Amid Push for European Military Autonomy

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Deepening Defence Cooperation:** The leaders of Germany and France pledged to significantly enhance their defence partnership to safeguard European freedom, security, and collective regional defence.
- **Joint Military Objectives:** The bilateral objectives outlined by both nations specifically prioritize the co-development and integration of advanced missile defence and long-range strike systems.
- **Countering Chinese Economic Pressure:** Both nations took aim at China's trade practices, stating that Beijing exerts drastic economic pressure on Europe through industrial overcapacity and an undervalued currency.
- **Subsidization Concerns:** The leaders highlighted that China violates international trade rules by providing state support to its domestic industry at levels at least eight times higher than OECD counterparts.
- **Resolving Bilateral Tensions:** The high-level meeting aimed to move past recent geopolitical friction stemming from the collapse of a collaborative joint fighter jet project earlier in the year.
- **Sovereign Nuclear Deterrent:** France explicitly maintained that it would retain unilateral operational and financial responsibility for its independent nuclear deterrent capabilities.





Essential Definitions

- **Strategic Autonomy:** The ability of a state or a coalition of states (like the European Union) to pursue its national interests and dictate its foreign policy independently, without relying excessively on external superpowers or foreign military assets.
- **Industrial Overcapacity:** A market condition where a nation's manufacturing capacity vastly exceeds its domestic consumption demands, leading to the dumping of heavily subsidized excess goods into global markets, thereby undercutting international competitors.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51 of the UN Charter:** Recognizes the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence among sovereign states, providing the legal basis for regional security alliances and collaborative defence manufacturing.
- **EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP):** The structural framework within the Treaty on European Union (TEU) that governs the gradual formulation of a common Union defence policy, facilitating initiatives like Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) to foster joint military capabilities.
- **WTO Subsidies Agreement:** International trade regulations governing the restriction of specific subsidies that distort market competition, central to European grievances regarding asymmetric trade practices.

Conclusion

The convergence of France and Germany highlights a structural shift toward military self-reliance in Europe, driven by evolving transatlantic dynamics and asymmetric economic threats from China. While bilateral friction in joint development persists, the shared emphasis on advanced strike capabilities and defensive modernization highlights a unified attempt to secure continental sovereignty.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's economy and strategic alignment.
- **GS Paper III:** Security challenges and their management; Global shifts in defense manufacturing and indigenization dynamics.

4. India-Japan Bilateral Infrastructure Cooperation: The Bullet Train Controversy

Key Highlights & Summary

- Former Japanese Justice Minister Hideki Makihara publicly alleged that India displayed "sheer recklessness" during negotiations, failed to keep promises, and stalled the Shinkansen project's progress.
- India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) swiftly rejected the allegations, officially terming them a "personal opinion" that stands completely "at variance with facts".
- The MEA clarified that bilateral discussions and construction operations regarding the high-speed rail corridor are progressing well between both nations.
- The controversial remarks specifically targeted the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High Speed Rail (MAHSR) project, which is a flagship joint initiative between India and Japan.



- The incident underscores the complexities of executing large-scale, transnational infrastructure projects involving deep diplomatic, financial, and regulatory integration.
- Despite individual criticisms, both governments continue to maintain robust strategic partnerships across geopolitical, economic, and technological spheres.

Essential Definitions

- **Shinkansen Technology:** Japan's pioneering high-speed rail network system known globally for its precision, safety records, and advanced crash-avoidance engineering.
- **Bilateral Diplomacy:** Political, economic, and cultural relations conducted directly between two sovereign states to fulfill mutual strategic objectives.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 73 of the Constitution of India:** Extends the executive power of the Union to matters with respect to which Parliament has power to make laws, including the power to enter into international treaties and agreements.
- **Entry 14, Union List (Seventh Schedule):** Grants the Central Government exclusive jurisdiction over entering into treaties and agreements with foreign countries and implementing treaties, agreements, and conventions with foreign countries.
- **Railways Act, 1989 & Metro Railways (Construction of Works) Act, 1978:** Provides the statutory regulatory framework for land acquisition, safety certifications, and infrastructure development for specialized rail networks in India.

Conclusion

Large-scale international infrastructure projects like the MAHSR naturally encounter operational bottlenecks, land acquisition hurdles, and shifting regulatory demands. While individual political opinions may highlight underlying negotiation frictions, institutional mechanisms and strong diplomatic ties between New Delhi and Tokyo remain resilient enough to absorb such friction and ensure project continuity.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
- **General Studies III (Economy & Infrastructure):** Infrastructure development encompassing Railways, investment models, and technological transfers.

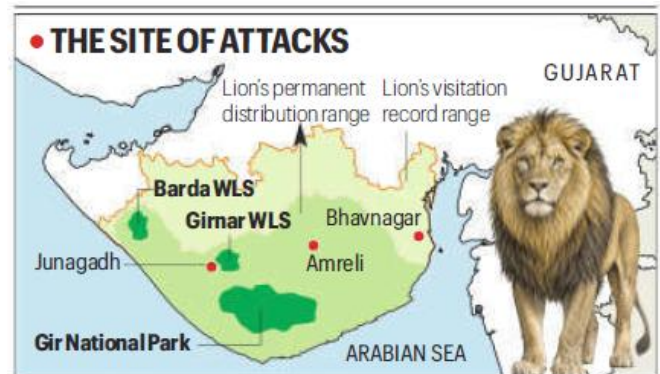
5. Human-Wildlife Conflict: Escalating Asiatic Lion Attacks in Gujarat

Key Highlights & Summary

- The Gujarat Forest Department has captured 31 Asiatic lions following a sudden surge of at least nine attacks within a month, which resulted in six human fatalities.
- Following the escalation, seven of the captured lions have been officially classified as "maneaters" and will remain confined to permanent captivity.



- To investigate the underlying causes of this crisis, the state government has roped in the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to conduct an in-depth study on recent behavioral modifications in the lion population.
- The geographical spread of these attacks spans beyond core protected zones into areas like Bhavnagar, Amreli, and Junagadh, highlighting the expansion of lion habitats into human-dominated landscapes.
- Local communities, particularly traditional pastoralists like the Maldharis, face severe vulnerabilities due to their close proximity to these expanding apex predator ranges.
- Experts attribute the rise in human-lion friction to habitat fragmentation, overpopulation within existing wildlife sanctuaries, and changes in prey base availability.



Essential Definitions

- **Asiatic Lion (*Panthera leo persica*):** A genetically distinct subspecies of lion restricted entirely to the Gir landscape and surrounding regions of Gujarat, India, currently listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List.
- **Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC):** Interactions between humans and wildlife that lead to negative impacts on human social, economic, or cultural life, as well as on the conservation of wildlife populations or their habitats.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Section 11, Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Empowers the Chief Wildlife Warden (CWLW) of a state to permit the hunting, capture, or permanent captivity of any Schedule I wild animal if it becomes dangerous to human life or is disabled beyond recovery.
- **Article 48A (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duties):** Imposes a constitutional duty on every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife, and to have compassion for living creatures.

Conclusion

The spike in lion attacks in Gujarat underscores the limitations of localized conservation models when apex predator populations spill over protected territorial boundaries. Mitigating this crisis requires a balanced approach that combines scientific behavioral assessments by institutions like the WII with community-led conservation practices, prompt compensation mechanisms, and long-term habitat management strategies to secure both human and wildlife safety.

UPSC Relevance

- **General Studies III (Environment & Biodiversity):** Conservation, environmental degradation, wildlife protection legislations, and management of human-wildlife conflict.
- **General Studies II (Governance & Policies):** Implementation of statutory frameworks like the Wildlife (Protection) Act and institutional interventions in ecological crises.



6. Status of the 130th Constitution Amendment Bill: Legal and Political Dimensions

Key Highlights & Summary

- The Union government has put the 130th Constitution Amendment Bill on the backburner to prioritize securing a parliamentary majority for the Women's Reservation Law and the Delimitation Bill in the upcoming Monsoon Session.
- A Joint Committee of Parliament, currently examining the Bill, has deferred the adoption of its report to conduct wider consultations on contentious clauses, following opposition concerns.
- The proposed legislation seeks the removal of ministers accused of offences punishable by five or more years of imprisonment if they have been arrested and detained for 30 consecutive days.
- Opposition members, including those from AIMIM, NCP(SP), and YSRCP, previously threatened a dissent note, raising apprehensions that the provision for "removal" might be misused or contradict the principle of natural justice.
- Allied parties like the TDP have expressed support for the bill's intent to curb corruption but have pushed for safeguards to prevent the potential misuse of such powers against political opponents.
- The committee is now deliberating on refining the language of the bill, including exploring the substitution of "removal" with "suspension" to ensure the law remains robust without being punitive before conviction.

Essential Definitions

- **130th Constitution Amendment Bill:** A proposed legislative move aiming to mandate the removal of ministers from office if they face prolonged incarceration (30 consecutive days) for serious crimes (punishable by 5+ years).
- **Natural Justice:** A legal philosophy which includes the right to a fair hearing and the rule against bias; critics argue the bill violates this by punishing representatives based on custody rather than a judicial conviction.
- **Delimitation:** The act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies to represent changes in population.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Constitutional Position on Ministerial Tenure:** Under Article 75(2) of the Indian Constitution, ministers hold office during the pleasure of the President. The bill seeks to formalize this by linking tenure to legal standing.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1951:** Currently, this act mandates disqualification of a legislator upon conviction for specific offences. The 130th Amendment attempts to expand this by introducing a preventive removal mechanism based on custody rather than a final verdict.
- **Procedural Mechanism:** The proposed bill suggests that removal could be directed by the President or Governor upon the advice of the Prime Minister or Chief Minister, or occur automatically on the 31st day of detention.

STATUS OF THE 130TH CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT BILL

Legal and Political Dimensions

WHAT THE BILL SEEKS

- Amends Articles 15(6) & 16(6) of Indian Constitution
- Provides 10% reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS)
- Applies to Govt Jobs + Private/Govt Educational Institutions

LEGAL DIMENSIONS

- Supreme Court 2022: 3:2 majority upheld the bill
- Quota allowed over existing 50% reservation cap
- Excludes "creaky layer" from EWS eligibility

POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

- Introduced by NDA Government (2019)
- Cross-party unanimous passage in Lok/Rajya Sabha
- Target upper-caste economically backward voters

WHY IT MATERS

- Expands affirmative action to economic backwardness
- Key Policy Topic for UPSC/Civil Services Exams
- Fills gaps in caste-based reservation framework

CIVIL SERVICES EDUCATION PAPERS



Conclusion

The deferment of the 130th Amendment Bill highlights the complex tension between the necessity of ensuring probity in public life and upholding the constitutional rights of elected representatives. While the intent to reduce corruption is clear, the legislative process must balance these goals with safeguards against political vendetta. The pivot toward wider consultations indicates a recognition that such a significant constitutional change requires broader consensus to avoid being viewed as a tool for political exclusion.

UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper II: Indian Polity and Constitution; Separation of powers between various organs, dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.
- GS Paper II: Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

7. Judicial Intervention in Access to Life-Saving Drugs

Key Highlights & Summary

- The Supreme Court has taken suo motu cognizance of judicial delays in cases involving access to life-saving medicines, specifically highlighting the tragic death of a petitioner while proceedings were pending in the Kerala High Court.
- The case centers on the unaffordable cost of Ribociclib, a patented medicine for breast cancer, which led to a plea for government-use licenses to facilitate the production of affordable generic versions.
- Despite the urgency, the matter was listed 57 times in the High Court without reaching a conclusion, prompting the Supreme Court to direct the High Court to dispose of the matter expeditiously.
- The Supreme Court bench, led by the Chief Justice of India, emphasized that judicial delays in health-related litigation directly infringe upon the fundamental right to life.
- The Kerala High Court has since expanded the scope of the case into a suo motu Public Interest Litigation (PIL) to examine the broader issues of exorbitant pricing and accessibility of patented life-saving drugs.
- Expert opinions from institutions like the National Cancer Institute have been sought to evaluate therapeutic alternatives, such as Palbociclib and Abemaciclib, to determine if they can effectively replace more expensive patented drugs.

Essential Definitions

- **Suo Motu:** A Latin term meaning "on its own motion"; it refers to the power of a court to take cognizance of a case or issue without a formal petition being filed by an aggrieved party.
- **Compulsory Licensing (Government-Use):** A legal mechanism under patent law that allows the government to authorize third parties or themselves to produce a patented invention without the patent holder's consent, usually to address public health emergencies or high costs.
- **Public Interest Litigation (PIL):** Legal action initiated in a court of law for the protection of public interest, where the harm caused to the public is the primary focus rather than individual injury.





Legal and Constitutional Framework

- Article 21: The Supreme Court has consistently interpreted the "Right to Life" to include the right to health and access to medical treatment. Unreasonable judicial delays in cases involving life-saving drugs are viewed as a violation of this fundamental right.
- The Patents Act, 1970: This act governs intellectual property rights for medicines. Sections related to compulsory licensing (Section 92) allow the government to intervene if a medicine is not available to the public at a reasonably affordable price.
- Judicial Activism: This case exemplifies the judiciary's role in monitoring the efficacy of legal processes, ensuring that procedural delays do not defeat the substantive ends of justice, especially in matters of life and death.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's intervention serves as a crucial reminder that the judiciary must be hyper-sensitive to the time-bound nature of health litigation. While protecting intellectual property rights is necessary for innovation, it cannot come at the cost of the right to life. By streamlining the adjudication process for affordable medicine, the court reinforces the principle that justice delayed in health cases is effectively justice denied.

UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper II: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.
- GS Paper II: Structure, organization and functioning of the Judiciary.
- Mains Focus: Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) regime versus Public Health concerns, the role of PILs in policy making, and the impact of judicial delays on fundamental rights.

8. Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) and India's R&D Leap

Key Highlights & Summary

- India is pivoting toward a research-led economic model, transitioning from a consumer of intellectual property to a global generator, supported by the newly operationalized Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF).
- Currently, India's R&D expenditure stands at approximately 0.64% of GDP, with a significant disparity compared to global leaders where private enterprise contributes over 75% of research funding.
- The ANRF, a statutory body chaired by the Prime Minister, has been designed to bridge this gap by committing Rs 1 lakh crore over six years to the private sector and an additional Rs 50,000 crore for foundational scientific research.
- The strategy emphasizes a "catalytic" model where government funding de-risks long-term research, encouraging companies to invest their own capital in pre-commercial innovations.
- Strategic focus areas include developing self-reliance in critical technologies to mitigate risks associated with fragile global supply chains and geopolitical dependencies.



अनुसंधान नेशनल रिसर्च फाउंडेशन
ANUSANDHAN NATIONAL
RESEARCH FOUNDATION



- The model draws lessons from India's pharmaceutical success in the 1990s, where the industry mastered process chemistry to become a global pharmacy, proving that Indian enterprise can scale up complex capabilities.

Essential Definitions

- Research and Development (R&D): The innovative activities undertaken by corporations or governments to develop new services or products, or to improve existing ones.
- Patient Capital: Long-term investment capital that is not overly concerned with short-term (quarterly) profits, allowing projects to reach maturity.
- Deep-Tech Start-ups: Companies based on tangible engineering innovations or significant scientific advancements rather than just software or business model modifications.
- Global Capability Centres (GCCs): Specialized centers set up by multinational corporations in India to perform critical functions, often acting as hubs for innovation.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- ANRF Act, 2023: This legislation established the Anusandhan National Research Foundation to provide strategic direction for research, innovation, and entrepreneurship in India. It aims to foster a culture of research in universities, colleges, and research institutions.
- Patents Act, 1970: Historically vital for the Indian pharmaceutical industry, this act balances the protection of intellectual property with public health needs, serving as a framework for the current push toward indigenous high-end manufacturing.
- Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Model: The framework through which ANRF operates, emphasizing shared risk and shared rewards between the state, academia, and industry.

Conclusion

India stands at a critical juncture where the combination of a demographic dividend, digital public infrastructure, and state-backed research funding offers a unique window for technological leapfrogging. The success of this transition depends on industry moving beyond risk-aversion and aligning with the ANRF's long-term vision to build domestic capabilities that ensure India's strategic autonomy in an increasingly volatile global landscape.

UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper III: Science and Technology – Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; Achievements of Indians in science & technology; Indigenization of technology.
- GS Paper III: Indian Economy – Mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment.
- Mains Focus: Understanding the shift from 'import-dependency' to 'technological sovereignty', the role of state-led catalytic funding in industrial growth, and the strategic importance of R&D in long-term economic resilience.

9. RBI Initiative: Transitioning to Polymer Banknotes

Key Highlights & Summary

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is initiating a trial for polymer currency notes, starting with a pilot phase for ₹10 and ₹20 denominations to evaluate durability and operational feasibility.



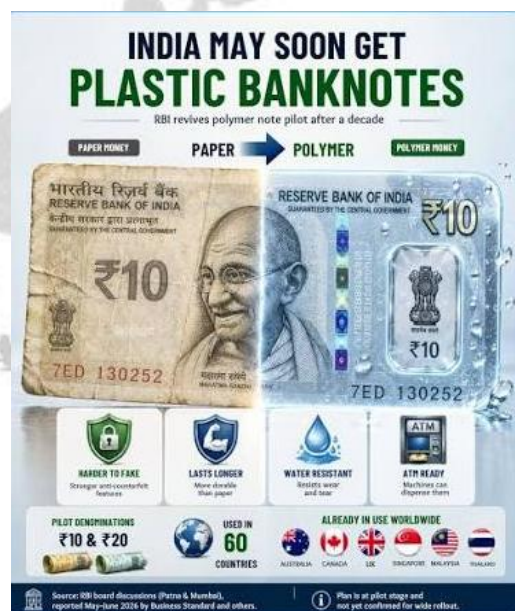
- A wholly-owned subsidiary, Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Private Limited (BRBNMPL), has floated a global tender for 68,000 reams of Biaxially Oriented Polypropylene (BOPP)-based polymer substrate.
- Polymer banknotes, first introduced in Australia in 1988, are used in over 50 countries and are considered superior to traditional cotton-paper notes due to their longevity and enhanced security features.
- The move aims to combat the rising incidence of counterfeiting and reduce long-term currency replacement costs, as polymer notes can last two to six times longer than paper equivalents.
- Strict security protocols are embedded in the tender, requiring that suppliers have no operational links with Pakistan or China, and that no raw materials or personnel involved in the project originate from these nations.
- Existing paper currency will remain legal tender and coexist with the new polymer notes during the transition, ensuring a non-disruptive experience for the public.

Essential Definitions

- **Polymer Banknotes:** Currency made from a synthetic polymer, specifically Biaxially Oriented Polypropylene (BOPP), which is non-porous, waterproof, and more durable than cotton-based paper.
- **Expression of Interest (EOI):** A formal preliminary step in the procurement process where the issuing authority invites potential suppliers to indicate their interest and capability to meet specific requirements.
- **Counterfeiting:** The illegal imitation of currency, which polymer notes help mitigate through the integration of complex, high-tech security features that are difficult for unauthorized parties to replicate.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **RBI Act, 1934:** Provides the statutory mandate to the Reserve Bank of India for the regulation of the currency system and the issuance of banknotes.
- **Currency and Coinage Division (Ministry of Finance):** Responsible for policy matters regarding the design, material, and security features of currency notes in coordination with the RBI.
- **Public Procurement Norms:** The tender process adheres to stringent government guidelines regarding the selection of foreign suppliers, emphasizing national security and "firewalling" operations from countries sharing a land border with India.



Conclusion

The RBI's decision to trial polymer notes is a strategic modernization effort aimed at balancing fiscal efficiency with technological security. By prioritizing durability and advanced anti-counterfeiting measures, the central bank seeks to build a more resilient cash ecosystem. The success of this pilot will determine the scale of future adoption, marking a significant shift in India's long-standing reliance on cotton-based currency.



UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper III: Indian Economy – Resource mobilization, growth, and development; Government Budgeting.
- GS Paper III: Science and Technology – Indigenization of technology and developments in material science.
- Mains Focus: Analyzing the economic rationale behind modernizing currency substrates, the impact of technological upgrades on national security (anti-counterfeiting), and the role of public sector undertakings (BRBNMPL/SPMCIL) in implementing macroeconomic policies.

10. NITI Aayog's Consultation on Content Blocking Regulations

Key Highlights & Summary

- NITI Aayog has initiated a consultation process with major technology firms and industry bodies to assess the operational feasibility of India's current content blocking requirements and transparency timelines.
- This move is part of a broader deregulation push under the 'Jan Vishwas Siddhant' initiative, which aims to clear the system's 'regulatory cholesterol' and foster a trust-based regulatory environment.
- The consultations focus on whether the recently shortened takedown timelines (now 2-3 hours for certain categories) are practically achievable for intermediaries of varying sizes.
- Tech giants, including Meta, have flagged concerns that these stringent windows do not provide sufficient time to investigate, validate, and process flagged content, potentially leading to compliance challenges.
- The government is exploring the simplification of legislation impacting online intermediaries, including data protection, online gaming, and platform governance, to reduce the recurring compliance burden on firms.
- The initiative underscores the tension between the state's security-driven need for rapid content removal and the operational constraints faced by digital platforms operating in a global landscape.



Essential Definitions

- Jan Vishwas Siddhant: A government initiative focused on rationalizing laws and promoting a trust-based regulatory environment by decriminalizing minor offences and simplifying compliance for businesses.
- Regulatory Cholesterol: A metaphorical term used to describe excessive, complex, or redundant bureaucratic procedures that hinder the ease of doing business and operational efficiency.
- Intermediaries: Digital entities, such as social media platforms, that host, store, or transmit content on behalf of third parties, subject to specific regulatory obligations under Indian law.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021: The primary framework governing social media intermediaries, which has been amended to mandate tighter timelines for grievance redressal and content removal.



- Section 69(A) of the IT Act, 2000: Empowers the government to issue directions to block public access to any information through any computer resource in the interest of sovereignty, integrity, and public order.
- Article 19(2): The Constitution allows the state to impose reasonable restrictions on the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression, which serves as the legal basis for content regulation in the digital domain.

Conclusion

The dialogue between NITI Aayog and tech stakeholders represents a crucial step toward balancing national security imperatives with the operational realities of the digital economy. While the necessity of timely content moderation is undisputed, the regulatory framework must be calibrated to ensure it remains feasible for platforms, thereby preventing inadvertent suppression of lawful speech and maintaining a functional digital ecosystem.

UPSC Relevance

- GS Paper II: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
- GS Paper III: Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.
- Mains Focus: The evolution of digital governance, the balance between state sovereignty and individual rights, and the efficacy of the current regulatory framework in managing the burgeoning digital landscape.

11. Strategic Augmentation of Naval Capability: MH-60R Seahawk Induction

Key Highlights & Summary

- The Indian Navy has received another MH-60R Seahawk multi-role helicopter from the United States, bringing the total delivered to 21 out of the 24 ordered under a \$946 million contract.
- These helicopters are specifically designed for anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and maritime surveillance, significantly enhancing India's operational dominance in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- The induction is part of a broader bilateral defense cooperation framework, with the final three helicopters expected to arrive shortly to complete the order.
- The MH-60R is considered one of the most advanced maritime helicopters globally, equipped with sophisticated sensors, sonars, and weapon systems, including torpedoes and Hellfire missiles.
- This acquisition reflects the deepening strategic partnership between New Delhi and Washington, focusing on interoperability and regional security architecture.
- The helicopters will be deployed across the Navy's frontline destroyers and frigates, providing a crucial force multiplier for both anti-submarine and surface-warfare missions.





Essential Definitions

- **Multi-Role Helicopter:** An aerial platform capable of performing a variety of missions, including ASW, search and rescue, logistics, and maritime surveillance.
- **Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW):** A branch of underwater warfare that uses surface warships, aircraft, or other submarines to find, track, and deter or destroy enemy submarines.
- **Interoperability:** The ability of different military forces (in this case, the U.S. and Indian Navies) to operate in conjunction through shared technology and standard operating procedures.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Foreign Military Sales (FMS) Program:** The mechanism through which India acquires high-end defense equipment from the United States, governed by bilateral agreements that ensure transparency and strategic alignment.
- **Defense Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020:** The overarching framework in India that governs the procurement of defense equipment, emphasizing the need for advanced technology induction to meet evolving security challenges.
- **Article 51:** While not directly linked to procurement, the Indian Constitution's Directive Principles of State Policy advocate for the promotion of international peace and security, which informs India's strategic hedging and partnership-based defense policy.

Conclusion

The induction of the MH-60R Seahawks marks a qualitative shift in the Indian Navy's maritime warfare capabilities. By bridging a critical capability gap in ASW, India is better positioned to safeguard its maritime interests and maintain a credible deterrent posture in the IOR. This acquisition underscores the transition from mere equipment procurement to high-level strategic integration with key global partners.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** International Relations – Bilateral, regional, and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Security challenges and their management in border areas – link of organized crime with terrorism; Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.
- **Mains Focus:** Understanding the 'Indo-Pacific' strategic construct, India's defense modernization roadmap, and the shifting dynamics of India-U.S. defense relations in the context of regional security.