



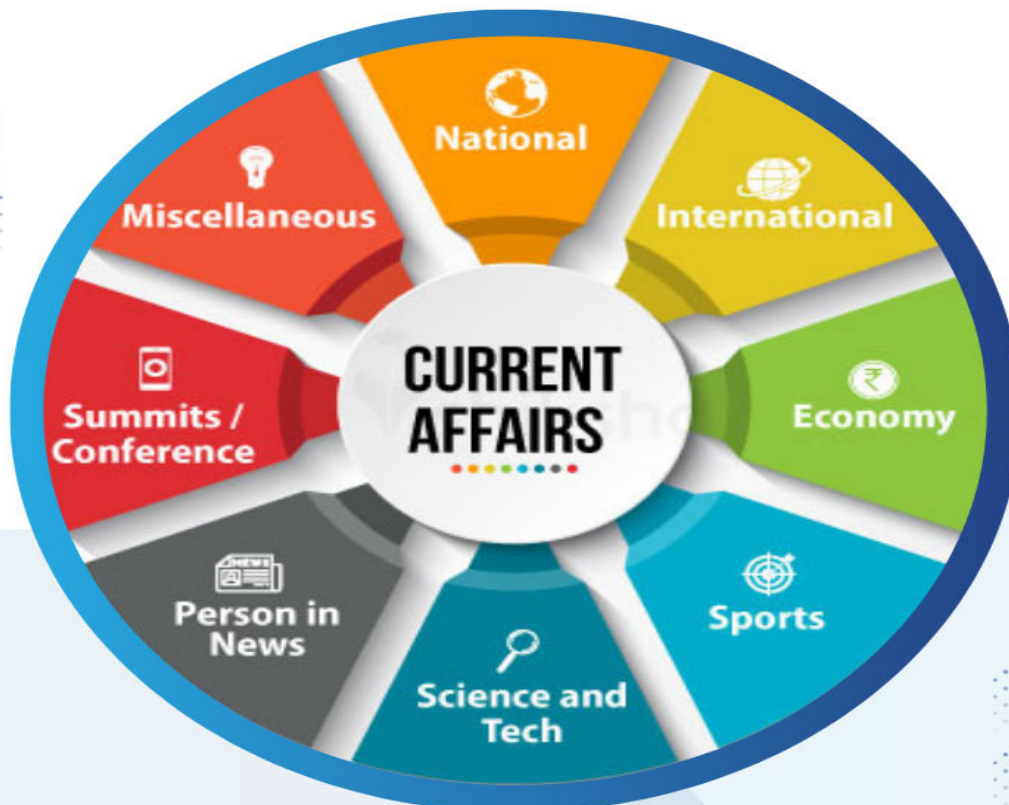
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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 27/08/2026 (THURSDAY)



9972258970 & 9740702455

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



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VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. Judicial Collegium System and High Court Judge Transfers

Key Highlights & Summary

- Supreme Court judge Justice Sandeep Mehta wrote three letters to CJI Surya Kant alleging misuse of power, favouritism, and maladministration against Rajasthan High Court Acting Chief Justice S.P. Sharma.
- Justice Mehta demanded the immediate transfer of the Acting Chief Justice to another High Court and the appointment of a permanent Chief Justice.
- The Chief Justice of India sought responses from both sides while the Supreme Court Collegium deliberated on high court appointments.
- The incident underscores internal administrative friction within the higher judiciary and raises questions about accountability in high court governance.
- The episode highlights the procedural mechanism of judge transfers and the role of the Supreme Court Collegium in safeguarding judicial integrity.
- It brings attention to institutional mechanisms needed for addressal of grievance and oversight within the judicial framework.

Essential Definitions

- **Supreme Court Collegium:** A forum comprising the Chief Justice of India and the senior-most judges of the Supreme Court that recommends appointments and transfers of judges in the higher judiciary.
- **Acting Chief Justice:** A judge appointed to perform the duties of the office of the Chief Justice of a High Court when the office is vacant or when the Chief Justice is absent or unable to perform duties.
- **Judicial Accountability:** The concept that judges and the judicial institution must remain answerable to ethical standard, legal mandates, and constitutional propriety while upholding judicial independence.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 222:** Empowers the President, after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, to transfer a judge from one High Court to any other High Court.
- **Article 223:** Outlines the appointment of an Acting Chief Justice for a High Court when the position falls vacant.
- **Third Judges Case (1998):** Established that the recommendation for transfer under Article 222 must be made by the CJI in consultation with a collegium of four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court.
- **K. Ashok Reddy Case (1994):** Ruled that judicial review of judge transfer orders is permissible only to prevent arbitrary exercise of power or lack of consultation.

Conclusion The allegations and administrative steps involving the transfer of a High Court judge reaffirm the delicate balance between internal judicial independence and administrative accountability. Resolving such conflicts through transparent institutional measures is vital for maintaining public trust in the administration of justice.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution—structural aspects, independence of judiciary, appointment and transfer of High Court judges, mechanism of judicial oversight, and constitutional provisions (Articles 222 and 223).
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Ethics in governance, administrative integrity, conflict of interest, institutional probity, and ethical leadership in constitutional offices.

2. Russia Turns to India for Emergency Petrol Supplies Amid Refinery Infrastructure Disruptions

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Shift in Energy Trade Dynamics:** Extensive damage caused by Ukrainian strikes on Russian oil refining infrastructure forced Russia—a leading global crude producer—to import gasoline from India for the first time.
- **Significant Import Volumes:** Ship tracking data indicates India dispatched over 1 million barrels of petrol to Russia across June and July 2026 to help stabilize domestic Russian fuel availability.
- **Role of Vadinar Refinery:** The Primary Indian supplier is Nayara Energy's Vadinar refinery in Gujarat, which features significant Russian equity backing and utilizes Russian crude for processing.
- **Circular Energy Flow:** The trade creates a unique circular dynamic where Russian crude imported by Indian refiners is processed locally and exported back to Moscow as value-added gasoline.
- **Russian Export Restrictions:** Facing a tight domestic petrol buffer, Russia imposed curbs on its own fuel exports and restricted per-vehicle retail sales across various domestic regions.
- **Regional Supply Complements:** While neighboring Belarus and Kazakhstan remain Russia's primary petrol sources, India's refining capacity serves as a vital swing supplier during regional deficits.

Essential Definitions

- **Refining Margin:** The financial difference between the total market value of refined petroleum products produced by a refinery and the cost of the raw crude oil used to produce them.
- **Ship-to-Ship (STS) Transfer:** The logistics operation of transferring liquid cargo directly between maritime vessels at sea, often utilized to manage long-distance trade routes or optimize vessel logistics.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 73 of the Constitution:** Extends the executive power of the Union to foreign affairs, international trade agreements, and diplomatic commerce policy.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Governs India's import-export regulatory architecture, empowering the Central Government to formulate national trade policy and manage energy exports.
- **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS):** Regulates maritime transit, high-seas commercial navigation, and international ship-to-ship transfer protocols across open ocean routes.



Conclusion

The reversal of refined product flows between India and Russia highlights the adaptability and global significance of India's downstream petroleum sector. By converting imported crude into high-value exports during supply dislocations, India reinforces its position as a central hub in global energy security while upholding national economic interests.

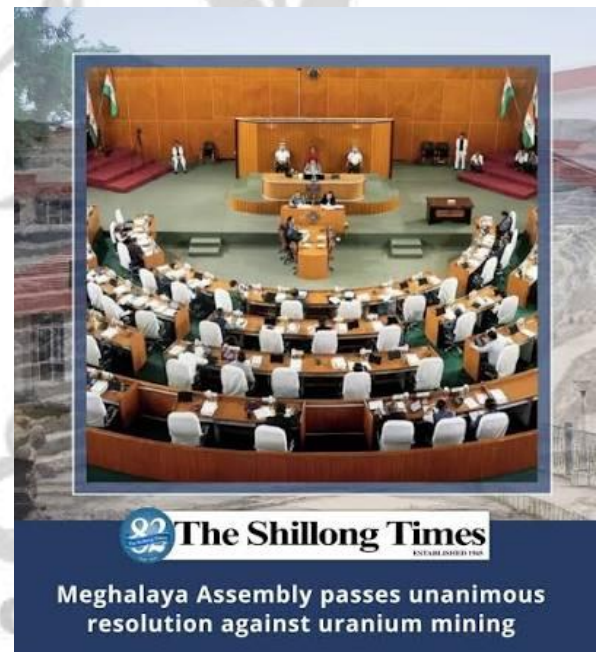
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral relations involving India, effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, and geopolitical impacts on energy diplomacy.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy—mineral and energy security, foreign trade dynamics, industrial infrastructure, and downstream processing capabilities.

3. Meghalaya Assembly Passes Resolution Against Mining and Processing of Uranium

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Unanimous Legislative Resolution:** The 60-member Meghalaya Legislative Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution recording the State's firm opposition to uranium mining and the establishment of any ore-processing facilities.
- **Alignment with Local Sentiment:** Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma affirmed that the state government stands aligned with local indigenous communities and tribal groups opposing hazardous uranium exploration.
- **Civil Society Pushback:** The resolution follows intense agitations led by the Khasi Students' Union (KSU), which voiced alarm over potential central moves to revive extraction efforts in South West Khasi Hills.
- **Judicial Precedent Alignment:** The resolution relied on the Supreme Court's 2019 precedent (*State of Meghalaya v. All Dimas Students' Union*), affirming that community and private tribal landowners own both surface rights and underlying subsurface minerals.
- **Constitutional Autonomy:** State leadership emphasized that Meghalaya's Sixth Schedule status protects traditional land tenure, safeguards clan ownership, and prohibits unilateral central land acquisition for radioactive extraction.
- **Legacy of Indigenous Resistance:** The legislative move provides statutory backing to decades of anti-uranium protests, famously spearheaded by tribal matriarch Spility Lyngdoh Langrin, who resisted lucrative state land buyout offers.



Essential Definitions

- **Uranium Ore Processing:** The physical and chemical extraction process (leaching) used to recover yellowcake (uranium oxide concentrate) from raw mined ore for atomic energy application.



- **Subsurface Mineral Rights:** Legal ownership rights over subterranean minerals, which in Sixth Schedule tribal regions reside with traditional landholders rather than solely with the sovereign state.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Sixth Schedule (Articles 244(2) & 275(1)):** Grants autonomous powers to District and Regional Councils in Meghalaya, protecting indigenous tribal land rights, social customs, and traditional administrative systems.
- **Atomic Energy Act, 1962:** Grants the Central Government exclusive control over strategic atomic minerals (such as uranium and thorium), creating regulatory friction with state land rights.
- **Supreme Court 2019 Ruling:** Clarified that under the Sixth Schedule framework in Meghalaya, sovereign eminent domain does not automatically extinguish tribal community ownership over subterranean mineral assets.

Conclusion

The Meghalaya Assembly's anti-uranium resolution highlights the delicate balance between national strategic energy imperatives and regional indigenous autonomy. Upholding environmental safeguards and customary land tenure remains essential to preserving public trust, ecological integrity, and constitutional federalism.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Federalism, Sixth Schedule provisions, constitutional rights of indigenous communities, and Centre-State relations regarding mineral governance.
- **GS Paper III:** Environmental conservation, health hazards of radioactive mining, and nuclear energy infrastructure policies.

4. ITA White Papers Call for Targeted Interventions to Safeguard Darjeeling and Dooars Tea Industry

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Plummeting Production Figures:** The Indian Tea Association (ITA) submitted two comprehensive White Papers to the West Bengal government highlighting a dramatic decline in Darjeeling tea production from 14.49 million kg in 1990 down to 5.6 million kg in 2025.
- **Proposed Financial Package:** To prevent systemic collapse, the ITA proposed an annual financial revival package of approximately ₹113 crore targeting orthodox production, capital interest support, factory modernization, and plantation rejuvenation.
- **Asymmetric Cost Dynamics:** The White Paper on Dooars and Terai pointed out severe market asymmetries, where small tea growers (STGs)—accounting for 68% of state output—operate without the statutory labor welfare obligations borne by organized estates.
- **Preserving GI Heritage:** Urgent government policy interventions were demanded to safeguard the globally protected Geographical Indication (GI) tag and international brand equity of Darjeeling tea.





- **Seasonal Industry Status:** The association recommended granting official "seasonal industry" status to Darjeeling tea gardens to provide fiscal flexibility during lean non-production winter months.
- **Comprehensive Policy Roadmap:** ITA representatives engaged state ministers to push for structural, climatic, financial, and regulatory reforms to restore long-term industrial competitiveness and secure rural livelihoods.

Essential Definitions

- **Geographical Indication (GI Tag):** An intellectual property right used on products having a specific geographical origin and possessing qualities or a reputation inherently due to that origin.
- **Orthodox Tea:** Whole-leaf tea processed through traditional manual or rolling methods that preserve complex natural flavors, distinct from automated Crushing, Tearing, and Curling (CTC) production methods.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Tea Act, 1953:** Establishes the statutory Tea Board of India under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to regulate tea cultivation, processing, export licensing, and plantation labor development.
- **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999:** Protects Darjeeling Tea—India's first GI-tagged product (2004)—against unauthorized commercial misuse and spurious blending.
- **Plantation Labour Act, 1951:** Mandates organized tea estate owners to provide social security, housing, healthcare, and educational facilities to workers, creating a fixed overhead cost structure for organized estates.

Conclusion

Resolving the structural crisis in North Bengal's tea industry requires harmonizing regulatory burdens between small growers and organized estates while modernizing processing infrastructure. Targeted financial packages combined with strict GI protection will ensure economic viability for producers and sustain millions of dependent rural livelihoods across Darjeeling and the Dooars region.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy—Issues related to agriculture, supply chain management, land reforms, and downstream food processing industries.
- **GS Paper III:** Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs)—Geographical Indications, brand protection, and global trade competitiveness under WTO frameworks.

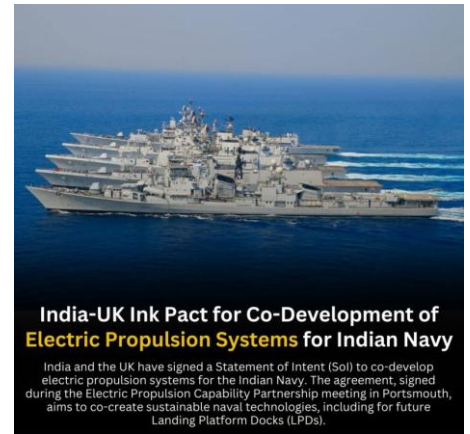
5. India and UK to Ink Pact to Develop Propulsion Systems for Navy

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA):** India and the UK are set to sign an IGA to codevelop maritime electric propulsion systems for four Landing Platform Docks (LPDs) for the Indian Navy.
- **Industrial Collaboration:** GE Vernova and Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) will establish India's first maritime Land-Based Testing Facility to support Integrated Full Electric Propulsion (IFEP) development.
- **Naval Fleet Modernisation:** Electric propulsion technology will power heavy warships exceeding 6,000 tonnes displacement and retrofit select legacy vessels in the Indian Navy.



- **Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMM):** A second bilateral pact involves procuring British LMM systems for the Indian Army to enhance air defence capabilities against drones, helicopters, and light-armoured targets.
- **Building on Prior Frameworks:** The agreements follow a Statement of Intent (SoI) signed in November 2024 at Portsmouth to foster co-design, co-creation, and co-production of electric propulsion systems.
- **Promoting Strategic Autonomy:** The government-to-government procurement aligns with India's Aatmanirbhar Bharat vision while fulfilling critical short-to-medium-term air defence requirements.



Essential Definitions

- **Integrated Full Electric Propulsion (IFEP):** An advanced marine architecture where gas turbines or diesel generators produce electrical power to drive propulsion motors and supply all shipboard electrical systems, increasing energy efficiency and stealth.
- **Landing Platform Dock (LPD):** An amphibious warfare ship designed to transport, deploy, and land troops, military equipment, and combat vehicles using amphibious landing craft and helicopters.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 73 of the Constitution:** Grants executive authority to the Union Government over foreign affairs, international defence agreements, and security procurement policies.
- **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020:** Governs defense equipment acquisition through Inter-Governmental Agreements (IGA) and mandatory Transfer of Technology (ToT) clauses to promote domestic manufacturing.
- **Navy Act, 1957:** Serves as the statutory framework regulating operational governance, administration, and command structure of the Indian Navy.

Conclusion

The strategic defense partnership between India and the UK marks a major advancement in naval technological self-reliance. Co-developing electric propulsion and modernizing air defense capabilities reinforces India's maritime presence in the Indo-Pacific while strengthening its domestic defense manufacturing ecosystem.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology—indigenization of technology, defense R&D, and development of new technologies in defense sectors.
- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral relations involving India and major global powers, effect of policies of developed countries on India's strategic interests.

6. India Rejects UN Human Rights Panel Findings on Marginalised Groups

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Outright Rejection by India:** India strongly rejected observations by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UN-CERD), deeming them "politically motivated" and "highly malicious".



- **UN Panel Allegations:** UN-CERD raised grave concerns regarding alleged human rights violations, extrajudicial killings, torture, and discrimination against Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Rohingya refugees.
- **Focus on Assam NRC:** The UN report sharply criticized the implementation of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam, alleging structural discrimination against Bengali-speaking Muslims and calling for its suspension.
- **Exceeding Mandate:** India's inter-ministerial delegation, led by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, stressed that the UN panel exceeded its convention mandate by relying on unsubstantiated generalizations.
- **Refutation of Categories:** India maintained that issues relating to caste, indigenous populations, or internal security matters do not fall under the strict operational definition of racial discrimination as governed by the ICERD.
- **Commitment to Human Rights:** Official spokespersons reaffirmed India's unwavering commitment to combating discrimination through robust constitutional safeguards, judicial remedies, and inclusive development policies.



Essential Definitions

- **UN-CERD (UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination):** A body of independent experts that monitors the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) by its State parties.
- **Principle of Non-Refoulement:** A fundamental principle of international customary law prohibiting the expulsion or forcible return of refugees to countries where their life or freedom would be threatened.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 15 of the Constitution:** Expressly prohibits the State from discriminating against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.
- **Article 21 of the Constitution:** Guarantees the fundamental right to protection of life and personal liberty to all persons, including non-citizens, within the territory of India.
- **Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955 & SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989:** Statutory instruments establishing stringent criminal penalties for caste-based abuses, hate crimes, and systemic discrimination.

Conclusion

India's rejection of the UN-CERD observations underscores the delicate friction between international human rights scrutiny and sovereign domestic governance. Upholding internal constitutional remedies while engaging constructively with global multilateral institutions remains essential for maintaining institutional credibility and protecting vulnerable communities.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Constitutional rights, Fundamental Rights (Articles 14, 15, and 21), protection of vulnerable and marginalized sections, and Centre-State legal mechanisms.

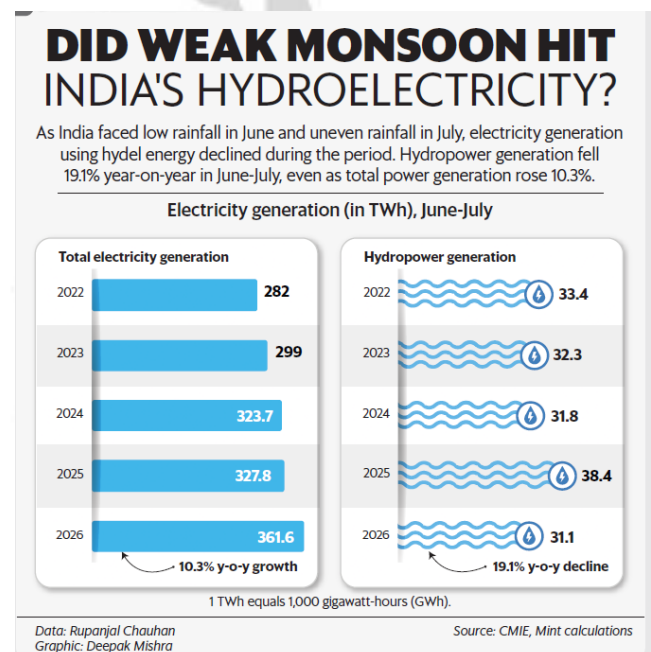


- **GS Paper II: International Relations**—Role and functioning of UN treaty bodies, international conventions (ICERD), and foreign policy implications of global human rights monitoring mechanisms.

7. Did Weak Monsoon Hit India's Hydroelectricity?

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Sharp Fall in Hydropower:** Hydropower generation in India experienced a steep decline of 19.1% year-on-year during June–July 2026, dropping to 31.1 TWh from 38.4 TWh in 2025.
- **Decoupling from Total Demand:** Total electricity generation continued to grow by 10.3% year-on-year, reaching 361.6 TWh in 2026, driven by intense summer heat and soaring peak load demand.
- **Monsoon Inconsistency Impact:** Low rainfall in June followed by spatially uneven rainfall in July severely depleted reservoir storage levels across major river basins, curtailing hydel output.
- **Increased Thermal Reliance:** The deficit in flexible hydro baseload forced higher reliance on coal-fired power generation to prevent grid instability and meet urban energy spikes.
- **Historical Generation Trend:** After hitting 38.4 TWh in 2025, hydro generation fell below 2022 levels (33.4 TWh), highlighting the extreme vulnerability of India's hydro sector to monsoonal variations.
- **Climatic Stressors:** Persistent oceanic phenomena such as El Niño disrupted seasonal monsoon performance, exposing structural gaps in seasonal power grid management.



Essential Definitions

- **Terawatt-hour (TWh):** A standard unit of energy equal to one billion kilowatt-hours (1 TWh = 1,000 GWh), used to measure large-scale national electricity production.
- **Peaking Power Plant:** An electricity generation facility designed to operate specifically during periods of high demand to balance grid frequency, a role traditionally fulfilled by flexible hydropower facilities.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Electricity Act, 2003:** Governs the generation, transmission, distribution, and trading of power, empowering the Central Electricity Authority (CEA) to monitor national grid stability and energy planning.
- **National Electricity Policy (NEP):** Outlines strategic targets to promote renewable energy integration, balance thermal-hydro ratios, and enhance pumped storage projects (PSP) for long-term grid resilience.
- **Entry 38, Concurrent List (Seventh Schedule):** Grants joint legislative authority to both Parliament and State Legislatures over electricity infrastructure and regional grid regulations.



Conclusion

The decline in hydropower generation highlights the vulnerability of India's power grid to climate-induced weather anomalies. To ensure energy security while advancing clean energy transitions, India must accelerate investments in pumped hydro storage, modern battery energy storage systems (BESS), and diversified renewable architectures to cushion against monsoon volatility.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy—Infrastructure: Energy, power generation mix, hydro-thermal integration, and grid stability.
- **GS Paper III:** Environment & Climate Change—Impact of climate variability on energy security, monsoonal fluctuations, and disaster risk management.

8. India and Japan to Deepen Cooperation in Startups and Deep-Tech

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Four-Pillar Strategic Framework:** Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal proposed a four-pillar framework comprising a Deep-Tech Capital Corridor, Two-Way Innovation Bridge, manufacturing integration, and joint pitching platforms at the Tokyo roundtable.
- **Dedicated Deep-Tech Fund:** India highlighted a proposed second Fund of Funds of approximately \$1 billion tailored to mobilize long-term capital for high-tech ventures and early-stage research.
- **Institutional Innovation Ties:** The India-Japan Pitching Series successfully connected 65 Indian startups with over 100 Japanese corporations, yielding over 30 business tie-ups.
- **Focus on Frontier Sectors:** Japanese investors identified artificial intelligence, semiconductors, space, defense, healthcare, and advanced manufacturing as key areas for cross-border investments.
- **Scaling Startup Ecosystem:** India's emergence as the world's third-largest startup ecosystem—expanding to nearly 250,000 registered startups over a decade—provides significant market scale for Japanese partners.
- **Two-Way Ecosystem Synergy:** The collaboration combines India's STEM talent pool, digital public infrastructure, and scale with Japan's patient capital, precision engineering, and quality standards.

Essential Definitions

- **Deep-Tech Startups:** Ventures built on tangible engineering innovations or scientific discoveries (such as AI, robotics, or quantum computing) requiring lengthy R&D cycles and capital-intensive commercialization.
- **Patient Capital:** Long-term investment capital provided by investors willing to forgo short-term financial returns in exchange for substantial economic and technological gains over an extended horizon.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 73 of the Constitution:** Grants executive authority to the Union Government to negotiate bilateral investment agreements, international trade policies, and cross-border innovation partnerships.



- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** Provides the statutory architecture regulating Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows, foreign venture capital investments, and cross-border capital corridor transfers.
- **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MSMED) Act, 2006:** Legal framework aimed at facilitating industrial promotion, competitiveness, and global supply chain integration for domestic enterprises.

Conclusion

The evolving India-Japan technology alliance reflects a strategic shift from software services toward high-tech manufacturing and deep-tech innovation. Institutionalizing capital corridors and co-development platforms ensures supply chain resilience, strengthens bilateral economic cooperation, and drives sustainable technological leadership in the Indo-Pacific region.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral relations involving India, effect of foreign policies on national interests, and Centre's executive mechanisms for international trade.
- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology—indigenization of technology, startup ecosystem development, deep-tech R&D investment, and industrial growth.

9. Behind Israel's West Bank Push: Domestic Political Imperatives

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Controversy Over E-1 Settlement:** Plans to construct 1,200 housing units in the E-1 zone—a 12-square-kilometre strategic corridor connecting Jerusalem to the Ma'ale Adumim settlement—have reignited intense domestic and international debate.
- **Electoral Calculations:** Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's push for settlement expansion ahead of the October 27 Knesset elections is primarily driven by coalitional politics to prevent right-wing voters from defecting to far-right parties like Otzma Yehudit.
- **Impact on Two-State Solution:** Expanding settlements in the E-1 enclave effectively bisects the northern and southern areas of the West Bank, severely compromising the geographic contiguity required for a viable Palestinian state.
- **Disconnect Between Military and Political Gains:** Despite military successes against regional adversaries following the October 7 events, poll numbers suggest difficulty in translating security gains into electoral dominance without securing far-right support.
- **International Resistance:** Strategic settlement plans in E-1 have historically faced strong opposition from the US, EU, and Arab nations, acting as a geopolitical deterrent to full territorial integration.
- **Domestic Accountability Resistance:** The ruling coalition has consistently resisted public calls for a national judicial commission of inquiry to investigate leadership responsibility surrounding October 7 security failures.

Essential Definitions

- **E-1 (East-1 Zone):** A contested 12-square-kilometre land area located in Area C of the occupied West Bank between East Jerusalem and the Ma'ale Adumim settlement.



- **Oslo Accords / Area C Framework:** Administrative divisions under the 1993 and 1995 interim agreements where Area C remains under full Israeli military and civil jurisdiction, covering roughly 60% of the West Bank.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Fourth Geneva Convention (Article 49):** Prohibits an occupying power from transferring parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies, forming the primary international legal objection to West Bank settlements.
- **UN Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016):** Reaffirms that Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian territories lack legal validity and constitute a flagrant violation of international law.
- **Basic Law of Israel:** Governing constitutional laws detailing executive powers, Knesset election procedures, and government formation requirements.

Conclusion

The acceleration of settlement initiatives in the E-1 area highlights how domestic coalition politics shapes Middle Eastern geopolitical dynamics. Prioritizing short-term political survival over long-term strategic consensus further complicates international peace initiatives and territorial dispute resolutions.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of foreign countries on India's national interests; West Asia geopolitical dynamics and regional stability.
- **GS Paper II:** International Treaties, UN Security Council Resolutions, International Humanitarian Law, and human rights frameworks.

10. NPCIL Plans New Design Unit to Support Private Players in Nuclear Sector

Key Highlights & Summary

- **NPCIL Technical Support Unit:** Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd (NPCIL) plans to establish a dedicated design and technical vertical to assist private companies and state governments entering the nuclear energy domain.
- **Promoting Indigenous PHWR Tech:** The vertical will provide design reviews, quality assurance, and technical handholding for 700 MWe Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs), leveraging India's mature domestic supply chain.
- **Enabling Legal Environment:** The initiative follows the enactment of the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025, and its subsequent draft rules.
- **Targeting 100 GW Capacity:** The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) roadmap aims to achieve 100 GW nuclear capacity by 2047, identifying indigenous PHWRs as the primary cost-effective vehicle.
- **Cost Advantage of Domestic Reactors:** Indigenous PHWRs cost approximately ₹18 crore/MWe, making them far more economically viable for India's price-sensitive market than imported LWR or PWR designs.
- **Corporate Participation Plans:** Major industrial entities like Adani Atomic Energy and Jindal Steel plan to develop nuclear capacity (10 GWe and 18 GWe respectively) utilizing domestic 700 MWe reactor standard designs.



Essential Definitions

- **Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR):** A nuclear power reactor using natural uranium as fuel and heavy water (deuterium oxide, D_2O) as both coolant and neutron moderator.
- **SHANTI Act, 2025:** Comprehensive statutory legislation that consolidated nuclear laws, permitted private sector entry into power generation, and restructured regulatory frameworks.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **SHANTI Act, 2025:** Repealed the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010; introduced a single composite licence for private operators while preserving state control over sensitive operations.
- **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB):** Possesses independent statutory authority under the SHANTI Act to mandate safety standards, license nuclear facilities, and inspect operational compliance.
- **Entry 6, Union List (Seventh Schedule):** Grants the Parliament exclusive legislative authority over atomic energy and mineral resources necessary for its production.

Nuclear power operator plans new design unit to support private players



Conclusion

NPCIL's proposal to create an independent technical support vertical creates a practical bridge between public technology expertise and private capital. Facilitating commercial adoption of indigenous 700 MWe PHWRs protects energy security, supports net-zero decarbonization goals, and strengthens India's advanced technology manufacturing capabilities.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure (Energy), Science and Technology—indigenization of technology, peaceful applications of nuclear energy, and private sector integration in infrastructure.
- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory, and quasi-judicial bodies (AERB, DAE), legislative policy frameworks, and federal energy governance.

11. OBC Creamy Layer: Supreme Court Clarification on "Rules of the Game"

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Special Bench Constitution:** The Supreme Court agreed to constitute a Special Bench to hear the Centre's plea seeking clarification on whether its March 2026 verdict on OBC creamy layer criteria applies to CSE-2025, whose final results were announced five days prior to the judgment.
- **Origin of Legal Dispute:** The controversy stems from a 2004 DoPT clarification regarding the 1993 Office Memorandum, which included salary income from PSU and private sector employees to determine creamy layer status, leading to claim rejections for around 100 candidates.
- **The March 2026 Ruling:** The Supreme Court held that income alone cannot be the sole criterion for determining creamy layer status among OBCs and set a six-month timeline (until September 11) for implementing the judgment.



- **"Rules of the Game" Doctrine:** Established in *Tej Prakash Pathak v. Rajasthan High Court*, this service law principle holds that eligibility criteria governing a selection process cannot be altered midway or after the examination process has commenced.
- **Centre's Plea against Retrospectivity:** The government contends that applying the judgment retrospectively to the concluded CSE-2025 cycle would create an acute anomaly, alter settled positions, and severely disrupt administrative allocation, training schedules, and cadre assignments.
- **Precedent from Divjot Sekhon Case:** Citing *Divjot Sekhon v. State of Punjab* (2026), the Centre argued that even when governing rules are held unlawful, relief should be molded to avoid unsettling already completed selections.

Essential Definitions

- **Creamy Layer:** A threshold concept in Indian administrative law identifying economically and socially advanced members of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) who are excluded from affirmative action and public employment reservation benefits.
- **Rules of the Game Doctrine:** A fundamental doctrine in administrative and service jurisprudence stipulating that selection criteria for public recruitment or educational admissions cannot be modified once the selection process has formally commenced.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 16(4) of the Constitution:** Empowers the State to make provisions for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens not adequately represented in State services.
- **Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992):** Landmark Supreme Court ruling that upheld 27% OBC reservation in government jobs while mandating the exclusion of the "creamy layer" to ensure equity.
- **Doctrine of Prospective Overruling:** Judicial principle allowing courts to invalidate a rule or interpret a law without affecting actions, admissions, or recruitment processes completed prior to the date of judgment.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's upcoming ruling on the Centre's plea will provide crucial administrative certainty regarding retrospective application versus prospective implementation of judicial decisions. Harmonizing equality in affirmative action with administrative stability remains essential to maintaining the integrity of public service competitive examinations.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution—Articles 15 and 16, reservation policies, affirmative action, statutory provisions for backward classes, and judiciary-executive dynamics.
- **GS Paper II:** Structure, organization, and functioning of the Judiciary; administrative law principles governing public recruitment and civil services selection mechanisms.



12. Devotees Perform Thiruvathira Dance During Onam Celebrations at Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Thiruvathira Dance Performance:** Devotees performed the traditional Thiruvathira dance, also known as Kaikottikali, at the eastern entrance of the historic Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple in Thiruvananthapuram during the Thiruvonam celebrations.
- **Cultural Context:** Thiruvathira is an ancient ritualistic folk dance performed primarily by women in Kerala during major festive occasions such as Onam and the annual Thiruvathira festival in the Malayalam month of Dhanu.
- **Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple:** Located in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, the temple represents an architectural synthesis of the indigenous Kerala style and the Dravidian style, dedicated to Lord Vishnu in the Anantha Sayanam posture.
- **Performance Elements:** Dancers move in synchronized circular patterns around a traditional brass wick lamp (Nilavilakku) while clapping their hands in rhythmic alignment with folk music and devotional chants.
- **Attire and Rituals:** Performers don traditional Kerala attire, specifically the two-piece *Mundu Neriyathu* or Kerala saree, adorned with jasmine garlands and *Dashapushpam* (ten sacred herbs).
- **Social Significance:** The dance serves as a vibrant expression of collective female participation, cultural preservation, and social unity across generations.

Onam vibe



In sync: Devotees perform Thiruvathira dance, also known as Kaikottikali, at the eastern entrance of Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple as part of the Thiruvonam celebrations, in Thiruvananthapuram on Wednesday. NIRMAL HARINDRAN

Essential Definitions

- **Thiruvathirakali / Kaikottikali:** A traditional folk dance of Kerala performed by women, characterized by rhythmic clapping, circular formations, and graceful, slow-paced movements (*Lasya*) centered around a lit lamp.
- **Mundu Neriyathu:** The traditional two-piece handloom garment of Kerala consisting of a lower garment (*Mundu*) and an upper drape (*Neriyathu*), typically woven with a golden zari border (*Kasavu*).

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 29(1) of the Constitution:** Guarantees citizens the right to conserve their distinct language, script, or culture, protecting traditional art forms and heritage rituals.
- **Article 51A(f) of the Constitution:** Imposes a Fundamental Duty on every citizen to value and preserve the rich heritage of India's composite culture.
- **UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003):** International framework supporting the documentation, protection, and transmission of traditional performing arts, rituals, and festive events.



Conclusion

The performance of Thiruvathira at iconic spiritual centers like the Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple highlights the enduring vitality of Kerala's intangible cultural heritage. Integrating community folk traditions with sacred public spaces reinforces social cohesion, preserves indigenous performing arts, and strengthens regional identity within India's broader pluralistic traditions.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Indian Culture—salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature, and Architecture from ancient to modern times (Folk dances of South India, Temple Architecture of Kerala).
- **GS Paper I:** Indian Society—Diversity of India, preservation of intangible cultural heritage, and role of community rituals in social harmony.



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