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FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

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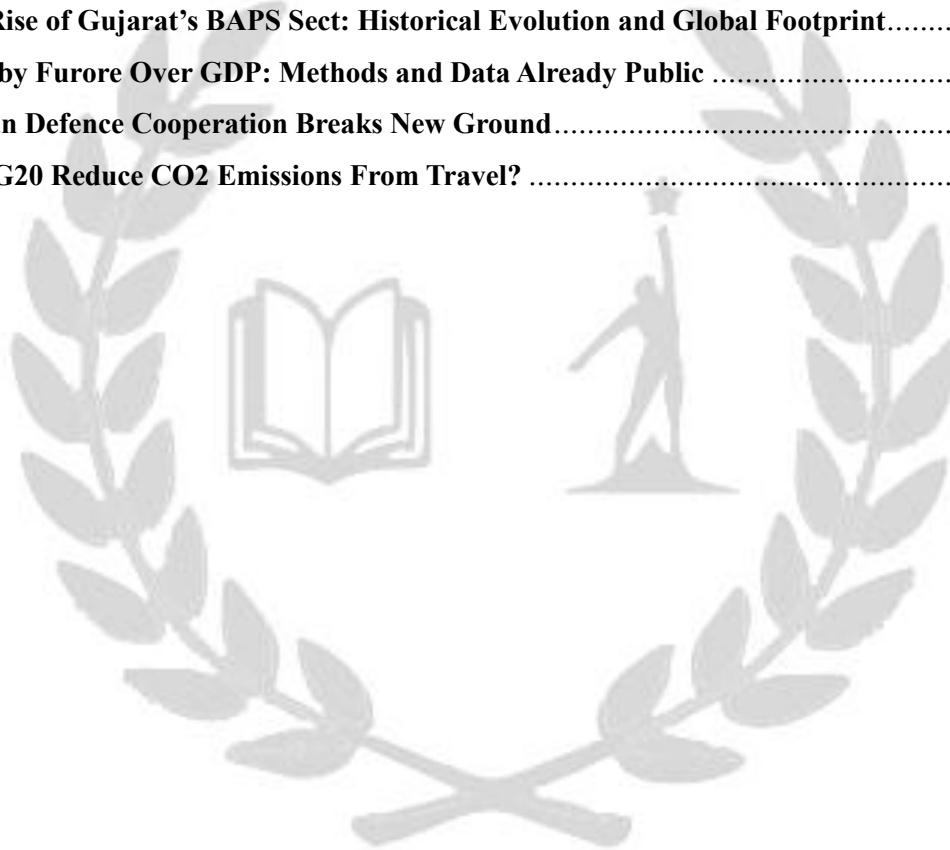
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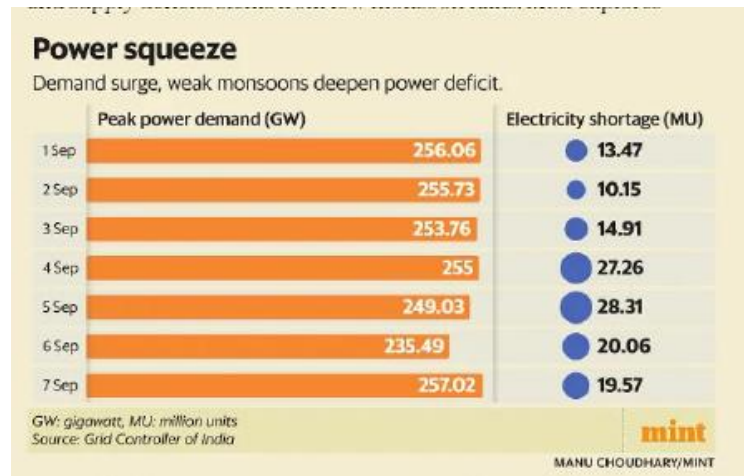
VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY



1. Weak Monsoon Fuelling Power Surge and Coal Deficit in India

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Surge in Power Demand:** India's peak power demand exceeded 255 GW in early September, with electricity shortages crossing 20 million units (MU).
- **Monsoon Interlinkage:** Weak monsoon rainfall has forced agricultural reliance on groundwater pumping for paddy crops while hot weather increased cooling load via air conditioners.
- **Impact on Hydropower:** Hydropower generation dropped by 14% year-on-year in July due to rainfall deficits, worsening the overall supply deficit.
- **Coal Inventory Depletion:** Coal stocks at thermal plants stood at 26.7 million tonnes (8.5 days of operations), with 58 plants operating on critically low stocks below 25% of required inventory.
- **Supply-Side Mitigations:** State-owned miners increased daily production by 35% to 1.83 million tonnes, scaling up railway rake loadings to 444 per day to rebuild thermal plant inventories.
- **Evening Peak Vulnerability:** Daytime power needs are supported by solar generation, but supply deficits emerge during non-solar evening peak hours when coal-based plants bear the load.



Essential Definitions

- **Peak Power Demand:** Highest total power consumption across the national grid at a given instant, measured in Gigawatts (GW).
- **Critical Coal Stock:** Situation where a thermal power plant maintains less than 25% of its normative reserve stock required for daily operational continuity.
- **Grid Stability:** Maintenance of constant frequency and voltage levels across the electrical network to prevent blackout risks under fluctuating demand loads.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Entry 38, List III (Concurrent List):** Electricity is a shared subject under Seventh Schedule of the Indian Constitution, placing responsibility on both Centre and States.
- **Electricity Act, 2003:** Principal statute governing generation, transmission, distribution, and energy trading; mandates central regulatory oversight by Central Electricity Authority (CEA).
- **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957:** Framework regulating coal mining leases, captive allocations, and resource development across states.
- **National Electricity Policy (NEP):** Guides capacity addition, renewable integration, and strategic coal reserves management for energy security.

Conclusion The sudden surge in electricity demand illustrates the delicate nexus between weather patterns, agriculture, and energy security in India. Although higher dispatch levels and daytime solar capacities prevent an immediate structural crisis, strengthening grid-scale energy storage solutions and improving seasonal coal logistics remain crucial for long-term power system reliability.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Governance, Statutory Bodies (CEA, CERC), Interstate Energy Management.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy (Infrastructure: Energy), Agriculture (Irrigation & Water Resources), Energy Security, Environmental Impact on Power Systems.
- **Essay:** Interlinkages between Climate Change, Water Table Depletion, and Energy Security.

2. Houthis Strike Oil Facilities Across Saudi Arabia: Escalation in West Asia

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Cross-Border Attacks:** Tehran-backed Houthi forces launched drone and missile strikes targeting four southern Saudi cities—Khamis Mushait, Abha, Najran, and Jazan.
- **Energy Infrastructure Hit:** Attacks caused blazes at Jazan's refinery-power plant complex and an oil distribution centre in Abha, injuring over 70 people.
- **Displacement Crisis:** Intense fighting along Yemen's western coast triggered the displacement of over 18,500 people within three days.
- **Maritime Tensions:** Iran's IRGC claimed the capture of an unmanned US submersible near the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, intensifying chokepoint security risks.
- **US Sanctions:** The US Treasury Department issued 36 fresh sanctions targeting Iran's aviation sector, including Mahan Air and foreign intermediaries.
- **Red Sea Blockade Threat:** The breakdown of ceasefires led to renewed Houthi threats against international shipping navigating the Red Sea.

Essential Definitions

- **Bab-el-Mandeb Strait:** A strategic maritime chokepoint connecting the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden, crucial for global crude oil and trade transit.
- **Non-State Armed Actors:** Groupings operating independently of formal state control that possess military capabilities to influence regional security dynamics.
- **Unilateral Sanctions:** Restrictive economic measures imposed by an individual nation targeting state or private entities without an explicit UN Security Council mandate.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **UNCLOS (Article 38 & Right of Transit Passage):** Guarantees continuous navigation through international straits, vital for protecting transit rights through Bab-el-Mandeb.
- **UN Security Council Resolution 2216:** Imposes targeted sanctions and an arms embargo against key Houthi leadership entities threatening Yemeni peace.
- **International Humanitarian Law (Geneva Conventions):** Mandates strict protection of civilian populations and essential energy or water infrastructure during armed conflict.
- **Article 51 of the UN Charter:** Recognizes the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in response to armed attacks on sovereign territory.

Conclusion The escalating strikes on Saudi energy facilities and maritime corridors underscore severe fragilities in West Asian stability. Uninterrupted hostility threatens global energy markets, destabilizes



essential shipping channels, and aggravates humanitarian hardship, necessitating diplomatic intervention to prevent wide-scale economic fallout.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings involving India/affecting India's Interests; Impact of Policies/Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's Energy Security.
- **GS Paper III:** Security Challenges and Management in Border Areas; Infrastructure (Energy Security and Supply-Chain Resiliency).
- **Location Focus:** Geographical Mapping of West Asia (Red Sea, Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, Jazan, Abha, Najran, Sanaa).

3. Five Baby Orangutans Spotted in Odisha: Suspected Exotic Wildlife Smuggling

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Unusual Discovery in Odisha:** Five juvenile orangutans measuring between 1 to 1.5 feet in height were rescued near Badapai village forest in Bhograi, Balasore district, Odisha.
- **Suspected Trafficking Racket:** Forest officials ruled out natural migration due to the lack of ecological corridors connecting South-East Asia to India, pointing to human-induced illegal smuggling by international syndicates.
- **WCCB Investigation:** The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), a multi-disciplinary central agency, along with local police, has initiated a probe to trace the trafficking network and conduct combing operations in surrounding forest areas.
- **Rehabilitation Plans:** Four of the rescued infants are reportedly healthy under veterinary supervision and are expected to be relocated to Nandankanan Zoological Park in Bhubaneswar after formal procedures.
- **Ecological Profile:** Orangutans are Asia's only great apes and the largest tree-dwelling (arboreal) mammals on Earth, indigenous exclusively to the rainforests of Borneo and Sumatra.
- **Conservation Crisis:** All three species of orangutans (Bornean, Sumatran, and Tapanuli) are categorized as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List due to severe habitat loss, poaching, and illegal pet trade.



Essential Definitions

- **Arboreal Mammals:** Animals that spend the vast majority of their life cycle in trees, adapted specifically for tree-canopy navigation and foraging.
- **Exotic Species:** Non-native animal or plant species introduced outside their natural geographical range through human activity or illegal trade routes.
- **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB):** A statutory multi-disciplinary body established under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to combat organized wildlife crime in India.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972:** Amended in 2022 to incorporate Schedule IV, regulating and enforcing compliance for CITES-listed exotic species inside Indian jurisdiction.
- **CITES (Appendix I):** Lists orangutans under Appendix I, prohibiting international commercial trade to protect them from extinction threats.
- **PARIVESH / HP-CITIES Registration:** Mandates statutory registration of exotic live specimens by owners or facilities on the central portal to monitor illegal possession within India.
- **Article 48A & 51A(g):** Constitutional provisions directing the State to protect and improve the environment, and placing a fundamental duty on citizens to safeguard wild creatures and show compassion for living beings.

Conclusion The illegal transit of non-native great apes highlights the evolving challenges posed by transnational wildlife trafficking networks operating along maritime and inland channels. Strengthening border surveillance, enforcing strict digital registry norms for exotic pets, and enhancing multi-agency coordination are indispensable steps to combat global illegal wildlife trade.

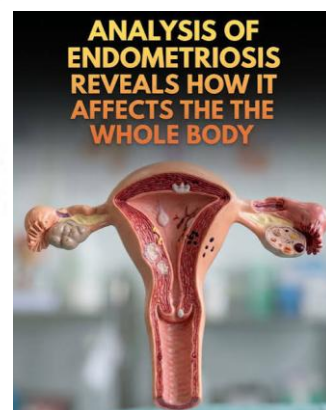
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Environment & Ecology (Biodiversity Conservation, IUCN Status, Wildlife Crime Control Bureau, CITES Framework, Illegal Wildlife Trafficking).
- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security (Cross-border Smuggling Networks, Organized Crime-Trafficking Links).
- **Species Focus:** Orangutan (Native habitat, IUCN status, ecological role as canopy dispersers).

4. Endometriosis Could Be Genetic, Reveals First Indian Genome Study

Key Highlights & Summary

- **First Indian Genome Study:** India's inaugural genome-wide association study on endometriosis, published in *Scientific Reports*, confirmed genetic susceptibility among Indian women, identifying 21 suggestive genetic regions associated with the condition.
- **Inclusivity in South Asian Genomics:** Led by scientists at ICMR-National Institute for Research in Reproductive and Child Health (NIRRCH), Mumbai, the study addresses the underrepresentation of South Asian populations in global genetic research, which previously relied primarily on European datasets.
- **Multi-Center Collaboration:** The research involved 18 centers across India, combining surgical, clinical, and laboratory teams to create a comprehensive clinical and genomic dataset under the ECGRI initiative.
- **Avenue for Early Diagnosis:** While not yet ready for immediate clinical testing, identifying these biological pathways offers a critical baseline for developing population-specific risk prediction models, targeted therapies, and early diagnostic tools.
- **Public Health Burden:** Endometriosis affects approximately 10% of women of reproductive age globally, but diagnosis is routinely delayed for years due to the normalization or dismissal of severe menstrual pain and chronic pelvic discomfort.





- **Global Policy Alignment:** The findings coincide with ongoing efforts by the World Health Organization (WHO) to draft updated guidelines for endometriosis management, recognizing it as a priority public health issue.

Essential Definitions

- **Endometriosis:** A chronic gynaecological condition where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus (endometrium) grows outside the uterine cavity, causing severe pelvic pain, inflammation, and potential infertility.
- **Genome-Wide Association Study (GWAS):** An observational research approach that scans complete sets of DNA across large groups of people to identify specific genetic variations associated with particular diseases.
- **ECGRI Initiative:** The Endometriosis Clinical and Genetic Research in India initiative, aimed at establishing dedicated genomic datasets and advancing clinical research on reproductive health in South Asia.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 21 (Right to Health):** The Supreme Court has repeatedly expanded Article 21 to include the fundamental right to health and specialized medical care, obligating public health initiatives to address gender-specific chronic diseases.
- **National Health Policy, 2017:** Emphasizes comprehensive primary health care, gender equity in health outcomes, and increased investment in indigenous biomedical research to tackle non-communicable and chronic diseases.
- **ICMR Ethical Guidelines:** Governs biomedical and health research involving human participants, ensuring strict informed consent, privacy safeguards, and equitable distribution of medical research benefits.
- **CEDAW (Article 12):** International treaty framework ratified by India mandating state parties to eliminate discrimination against women in access to healthcare services throughout their life cycle.

Conclusion India's first genome-wide study marks a transformative step towards addressing systemic diagnostic delays in women's reproductive health. By providing an indigenous genetic baseline, this research paves the way for precise diagnostic tools, improved therapeutic interventions, and targeted public health policies to address the chronic burden of endometriosis.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Health Infrastructure, Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health and Gender, Government Policies and Interventions.
- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology (Indigenization of Technology, Applications of Biotechnology, Genomics in Healthcare, R&D in Public Health).
- **Key Focus:** Medical Biotechnology, Indian Genome Research, Gender Health Disparities.

5. India's Young Can Power the World's Ageing Economies

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Demographic Transition in Advanced Economies:** Advanced economies face declining fertility rates, shrinking workforces, and labor shortages in key sectors such as healthcare, infrastructure, and the digital economy.



- **India's Strategic Advantage:** India holds the largest reservoir of young human capital globally, with approximately 450 million individuals aged between 18 and 35 years.
- **Transition to Brain Circulation:** The outdated concept of "brain drain" is evolving into "brain circulation," where skilled diaspora contribute back through remittances, technology transfer, and international influence.
- **Substantial Remittance Inflows:** India received over \$110.47 billion in worker remittances in FY 2025–26, marking a 26% increase over the previous year.
- **Surmounting Anti-Immigration Sentiment:** Developing ethical mobility frameworks and G2G bilateral partnerships is vital to mitigate growing political opposition to immigration in destination countries.
- **Strategic Role of Circular Mobility:** Temporary, structured labor arrangements, such as Singapore's work-permit model or Hong Kong's skilled-worker system, offer politically sustainable solutions for long-term global skills mobility.



Essential Definitions

- **Demographic Dividend:** Economic growth potential resulting from shifts in a population's age structure, particularly when the working-age population (15 to 64 years) is larger than the non-working-age population.
- **Brain Circulation:** The two-way flow of skilled professionals, knowledge, capital, and technology between a migrant's home country and host nations, replacing unidirectional permanent migration.
- **Circular Mobility:** Temporary, recurrent movement of international workers between home and host countries, structured under formal, ethical, and legal labor frameworks.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 19(1)(e) & (g):** Guarantees Indian citizens the fundamental right to reside anywhere in India and practice any profession, trade, or business, including working abroad under legal channels.
- **Emigration Act, 1983:** Governs the recruitment, emigration, and welfare of Indian workers seeking overseas employment, overseen by the Protector General of Emigrants (PGE).
- **Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreements (MMPAs):** Bilateral treaties signed by India with nations like Germany, France, and Japan to promote legal labor mobility while curbing illegal migration.
- **eMigrate System:** A digital initiative integrated by the Ministry of External Affairs to ensure transparent recruitment and protect vulnerable overseas Indian workers from exploitation.

Conclusion Converting India's massive demographic surplus into a global strategic advantage requires robust skills certification, language training, and ethical mobility frameworks. By positioning itself as a reliable hub for globally employable talent, India can power foreign economies while bolstering its own financial stability and global diplomatic footprint.



UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Indian Diaspora, Government Policies & Interventions, Bilateral Agreements, International Relations.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy (Employment, Human Resource Development, Skill Capital, Infrastructure, Remittance Inflows).
- **Essay Topics:** Harnessing Demographic Dividend; Brain Drain versus Brain Gain; Skill India for the Global Economy.

6. A Possible G3 is Casting a Shadow Over BRICS

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Shifting Geopolitical Dynamics:** While BRICS focuses on institutional cooperation across sectors like agriculture and health, key driving forces Russia and China are pursuing separate strategic accommodations with the United States.
- **Emergence of a Great Power G3:** A potential triangular global directorate involving the US, Russia, and China threatens to bypass broader multilateral groupings and reset post-Cold War power structures.
- **Internal Coherence Challenges in BRICS:** Recent expansion has heightened intra-group divergence, exemplified by opposing stances between Tehran and Abu Dhabi regarding West Asian conflicts and maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Transactional Diplomacy:** US-China negotiations combine trade truces and technology constraints, while American shuttle diplomacy seeks peace in Eastern Europe alongside ongoing military prep.
- **Allied Concerns Over Trilateral Deals:** European and Asian partners fear that bilateral negotiations between Washington, Moscow, and Beijing could weaken global security commitments.
- **Strategic Realignment for India:** To navigate potential exclusion from a three-cornered global power structure, India must accelerate internal economic development, separate multipolarity from anti-Western rhetoric, and strengthen plurilateral ties beyond BRICS.



Essential Definitions

- **G3 (Great Power Directorate):** An informal geopolitical construct representing direct strategic, economic, and security alignment among three major powers—the United States, Russia, and China.
- **Multipolarity:** A distribution of global power in which more than two nation-states have nearly equal amounts of military, economic, and cultural influence.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** A state's capacity to pursue its national interests and foreign policy objectives independently, without relying excessively on external superpowers.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Directs the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just relations between nations, and foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **UN Charter (Article 2 & Article 24):** Establishes sovereign equality of member states while vesting primary responsibility for international peace and security in the UN Security Council.
- **UNCLOS (Freedom of Navigation):** Regulates international maritime laws ensuring unimpeded passage through crucial international shipping straits, including the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) Framework:** Provides legal mechanisms for managing bilateral trade partnerships, export controls, and strategic supply chain resilience amid changing global tariffs.

Conclusion The possible emergence of a tri-polar global order driven by the US, China, and Russia poses a structural challenge to middle powers and broad multilateral groupings like BRICS. India's long-term diplomatic leverage relies on compounding its domestic economic strength, managing bilateral ties pragmatically, and diversifying strategic partnerships across minilateral platforms.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** International Relations (Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings involving India; Effect of Policies/Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's Interests).
- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security & Strategic Studies (Supply-Chain Resiliency, Strategic Autonomy, Maritime Corridor Security).
- **Key Focus:** BRICS Expansion, Multipolarity vs. Triangular Directorate (G3), India's Foreign Policy Calculus.

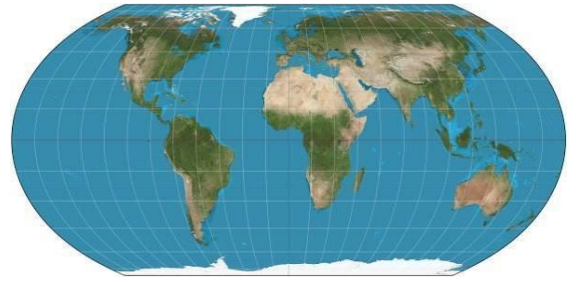
7. Why a Flat Map Fails to Accurately Depict Earth

Key Highlights & Summary

- **UN Adoption of Equal Earth Map:** The United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution shifting towards the 2018 Equal Earth design to present accurate landmass proportions, particularly correcting historical distortions of Africa and the Global South.
- **Limitations of Flat Projections:** Projecting a three-dimensional sphere onto a two-dimensional flat plane inherently involves geometric trade-offs across shape, area, distance, or direction.
- **Mercator Projection & Colonial Bias:** Introduced in 1569 by Gerardus Mercator, the conformal Mercator layout preserves compass directions for maritime navigation but severely inflates high-latitude regions, making Greenland appear similar in size to Africa despite Africa being 14 times larger.
- **Typology of Map Projections:**
 - **Conformal Projections (Mercator):** Preserve local shapes and angles but distort high-latitude surface areas.
 - **Equal-Area Projections (Equal Earth, Gall-Peters):** Maintain relative landmass sizes, making them ideal for thematic, statistical, and thematic population mapping.
 - **Compromise Projections (Robinson, Winkel Tripel):** Balance distortions across shape, area, and distance for general world maps.



- **Azimuthal Projections:** Project the globe from a central point onto a flat surface, optimal for polar mapping and aviation routes.
- **Educational and Policy Shift:** Non-binding UN resolutions aim to counter "colonial perceptions" in cartography by encouraging educational institutions and international bodies to use equal-area maps.
- **Utility for Thematic Data:** Equal-area designs like the Equal Earth map provide accurate spatial foundations for analyzing global climate impacts, land cover, and population density across the Indian subcontinent and global tropics.



Essential Definitions

- **Map Projection:** The mathematical transformation of a three-dimensional spherical surface onto a two-dimensional flat plane.
- **Conformal Map:** A map projection that preserves local angles, shapes, and rhumb lines (constant compass direction) while distorting geographical area scale.
- **Equal-Area Projection:** A map projection that maintains the correct relative proportions of landmasses across the entire globe at the expense of slight shape distortion.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **National Geospatial Policy, 2022:** Regulates geospatial data creation, map standards, and spatial data infrastructure in India to ensure accurate national mapping.
- **Survey of India Framework:** The official national mapping agency operating under the Department of Science and Technology, governed by standard cartographic protocols and datum references.
- **UN Cartographic Guidelines:** Standardized international cartographic practices guiding UN bodies and international treaties on official geographical representation.
- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Directs the State to foster respect for international law and international organization standards, including treaty cartography and border definitions.

Conclusion No single flat map can perfectly represent the Earth's surface without mathematical trade-offs. The shift toward equal-area projections like the Equal Earth map reflects a broader effort to eliminate Eurocentric visual biases, providing an accurate spatial baseline for global policy, education, and geographic analysis.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Physical Geography (Cartography, Fundamentals of Map Projections, Earth's Shape & Coordinates).
- **GS Paper II:** International Organizations (UN Resolution Frameworks, Soft Power, De-colonization of Knowledge Systems).
- **GS Paper III:** Science and Technology (Geospatial Technology, Spatial Data Infrastructure, Remote Sensing Applications).



8. Inside India's Problem with Reporting Child Sexual Abuse Material

Key Highlights & Summary

- **NHRC Notice to Ministries:** The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued notices to MeitY, MIB, and Delhi Police over paid Instagram advertisements redirecting users to Telegram channels distributing child sexual abuse material (CSAM).
- **Mandatory Reporting Obligations:** Section 19 of the POCSO Act strictly obligates platforms and individuals aware of CSAM to report it directly to the Special Juvenile Police or local units, rather than handling it internally.
- **Re-evaluating Intermediary Status:** The NHRC raised critical questions on whether social media platforms using AI systems to generate captions, optimize engagement, and monetize content remain passive intermediaries under IT Rules, 2021.
- **Low Conversion Rate of CyberTipline Reports:** India received nearly 1.9 million CyberTipline reports in 2025, but only a small fraction converted into actionable police investigations due to multi-layered agency routing.
- **Operational Hurdles in Investigation:** Key challenges include identifying content origin across encrypted platforms, verifying victim age, addressing AI-generated CSAM, and establishing device ownership.
- **Evidentiary Standard Requirements:** Successful prosecution in POCSO special courts requires strict maintenance of digital evidence chains, certified under Section 63 of Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023.



Essential Definitions

- **CSAM (Child Sexual Abuse Material):** Any visual, audio, or digital depiction of explicit sexual conduct involving a minor or a person appearing to be a minor.
- **CyberTipline:** A centralized international reporting mechanism operated by NCMEC (US) that routes automated alerts on suspected online child exploitation to regional law enforcement agencies worldwide.
- **Digital Intermediary:** An entity that receives, stores, or transmits electronic records or provides services with respect to that record on behalf of another person.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Section 19, POCSO Act, 2012:** Mandates compulsory reporting of any apprehension or knowledge of child sexual abuse offences to specialized law enforcement units.
- **Section 67B, Information Technology Act, 2000:** Criminalizes publishing, transmitting, or browsing material depicting children in sexually explicit acts online.
- **Section 63, Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023:** Regulates the admissibility of electronic records and requires formal certification to prove an unbroken digital chain of custody.



- **Articles 21 & 39(f), Constitution of India:** Guarantees protection of personal liberty and directs the State to ensure children are protected against exploitation and moral/material abandonment.

Conclusion Addressing online child sexual abuse requires shifting from passive reliance on external alerts to enforcing proactive legal accountability for digital platforms. Aligning intermediary liability with AI capability, simplifying multi-agency verification, and upgrading cyber-investigation infrastructure are vital to protect children in the digital sphere.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory Bodies (NHRC), Governance, Protection of Vulnerable Sections, Government Policies and Interventions.
- **GS Paper III:** Cyber Security, Role of Media and Social Networking Sites in Internal Security Challenges, Digital Evidence Management.
- **Key Focus:** POCSO Enforcement, Intermediary Liability (IT Rules, 2021), CyberTipline Limitations.

9. Roots and Rise of Gujarat's BAPS Sect: Historical Evolution and Global Footprint

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Paris Eiffel Tower Controversy:** The Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) faced controversy in Paris after Eiffel Tower staff protested allegations that female employees were asked to step away during a visit by the sect's male monk delegation, leading to a formal apology from BAPS.
- **Origins of Swaminarayan Sampradaya:** Founded in 1802 in Gujarat by Sahajanand Swami (born Ghanshyam Pande in 1781 near Ayodhya), who was initiated into the Bhakti tradition by Swami Ramanand.
- **Formation of BAPS:** Shastri Maharaj established BAPS in 1907 in Bochasan village (Anand district, Gujarat) after breaking away from the Vadtal diocese, growing into the largest splinter group of the Swaminarayan Sampradaya.
- **Distinctive Monastic Practices:** BAPS sadhus practice strict celibacy (*brahmacharya*) and ritual separation from women during worship and personal interactions, though over 50% of the overall global fellowship consists of female devotees.
- **Global Presence & Architecture:** BAPS has established over 1,300 temples globally, including prominent Akshardham complexes in Gandhinagar, New Delhi, Robbinsville (New Jersey), Abu Dhabi, and France's first major BAPS temple in Paris.
- **Diaspora Linkages & Social Work:** The sect's spread closely parallels the Gujarati diaspora migration to East Africa, the UK, and the US, while engaging actively in disaster relief operations, such as post-2001 Kutch earthquake rehabilitation.

Essential Definitions

- **Swaminarayan Sampradaya:** A socio-religious movement within Vaishnava Hinduism established in early 19th-century Gujarat, rooted in the *Bhakti* movement and emphasizing moral purity, social reform, and devotion.



- **BAPS (Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha):** A major socio-spiritual organization within Swaminarayan Hinduism, officially established in 1907 by Shastri Maharaj based on the Akshar-Purushottam doctrine.
- **Bhakti Movement:** A socio-religious reform movement in medieval India that promoted personal devotion to a personal deity, social equality, and spiritual accessible practices across caste and gender lines.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 25:** Guarantees freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise, and propagate religion, subject to public order, morality, and health.
- **Article 26:** Grants religious denominations the right to manage their own affairs in matters of religion, establish institutions for religious and charitable purposes, and own property.
- **Article 15:** Prohibits discrimination by the State on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, creating a balance with denominational rights under Article 26.
- **Article 51A(f):** Mandates a fundamental duty on every Indian citizen to value and preserve the rich heritage of the country's composite culture.

Conclusion The BAPS sect illustrates the global expansion of India's Bhakti traditions, carrying socio-cultural heritage and architectural craft across international borders. As religious denominations interact with global public spaces, balancing traditional monastic codes with contemporary international gender and labor norms remains essential for harmonious soft power diplomatic ties.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Indian Culture (Bhakti Movement, Temple Architecture, Indian Diaspora and Socio-Religious Reform Movements).
- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution (Fundamental Rights: Freedom of Religion vs. Non-Discrimination Frameworks under Articles 15, 25, and 26).
- **Key Focus:** Cultural Diplomacy, Swaminarayan Traditions, International Footprint of Indian Religious Denominations.

10. Surprised by Furore Over GDP: Methods and Data Already Public

Key Highlights & Summary

- **MoSPI Clarification on GDP Data:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) Secretary Saurabh Garg stated that criticisms regarding the new GDP series are unwarranted, emphasizing that methodology and underlying technical data have been in the public domain since early 2026.
- **Q1 FY27 Growth Print:** First-quarter real GDP growth for 2026-27 came in at 7.8%, exceeding initial market expectations and triggering debate among economists regarding estimation methodologies.
- **Transition to Direct Informal Sector Data:** Downward revisions in nominal GDP for prior years resulted from replacing old proxy-based estimates with direct empirical surveys, including the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) and the Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE).



- **Integration of Digital Databases:** The new series incorporates comprehensive digital and administrative datasets such as Goods and Services Tax (GST) records, Public Financial Management System (PFMS), and the e-Vahan portal to improve estimation accuracy.
- **Incomparability of Base Series:** MoSPI noted that direct comparisons between older series (e.g., 2004-05 or 2011-12) and the revised series are methodologically flawed due to differences in data coverage and structural indicators.
- **Methodological Transparency:** Key technical foundations for the base revision were detailed through sub-committee reports released by the Advisory Committee on National Accounts Statistics (ACNAS).



Essential Definitions

- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** The total monetary value of all final goods and services produced within a country's geographical boundaries during a specific time period.
- **Base Year Revision:** The periodic process of updating the benchmark year used for national accounts to capture structural economic changes, new data sources, and updated price levels.
- **Informal Sector Empirical Surveys:** Field-based data collection mechanisms like ASUSE and PLFS used to directly measure output, employment, and value addition in unorganized economic activities.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Collection of Statistics Act, 2008:** Statutory framework empowering the government to collect administrative, economic, and social data for policy formulation and statistical accuracy.
- **National Statistical Commission (NSC) Mandate:** Advisory body established via executive order to oversee national statistical standards, reduce data gaps, and maintain statistical integrity across national accounts.
- **Article 280 & Fiscal Planning:** Accurate GDP data forms the baseline calculation for vertical and horizontal tax devolution recommendations made by the Finance Commission.
- **FRBM Act, 2003:** Uses nominal GDP figures as the statutory baseline denominator to compute state and central debt-to-GDP and fiscal deficit-to-GDP targets.

Conclusion The base year revision of GDP data reflects necessary structural modernization by incorporating direct informal sector metrics and real-time digital administrative data. Maintaining clear technical transparency through national accounts committees remains critical to preserving institutional credibility and ensuring accurate macroeconomic decision-making.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy (National Income Accounting, GDP Estimation Methods, Informal Sector Measurement, Base Year Revisions).
- **GS Paper II:** Governance and Institutional Frameworks (MoSPI, National Statistical Commission, Data Transparency in Public Policy).



- **Key Focus:** GDP Base Revision, ASUSE & PLFS Integration, Macroeconomic Statistics Credibility.

11. India-Japan Defence Cooperation Breaks New Ground

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Operational Shift in Strategic Ties:** The August 2026 visit of Japanese Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi to India signifies a strategic evolution, transitioning the bilateral relationship from institutional dialogues (2+2 mechanisms) into direct operational capabilities and joint readiness.
- **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):** Both nations are accelerating information-sharing mechanisms to connect the Western Indian Ocean and the Pacific, establishing continuous security coverage across critical Indo-Pacific sea lines of communication.
- **UNICORN Technology Transfer:** Progress on co-developing the UNICORN stealth integrated communications antenna system—involving Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)—serves as a flagship project for defence technology transfer under 'Make in India'.
- **Naval Maintenance and Shipbuilding:** Talks focused on leveraging Japanese technological design alongside Indian production capacity, exploring reciprocal ship repair facilities and joint naval shipbuilding initiatives.
- **Expanding Joint Combat Drills:** Bilateral exercises are expanding in scale and complexity, including Japanese fighter jet participation in Exercise Veer Guardian 2026, integration of unmanned aerial systems, and special operations collaboration.
- **Rule-Based Maritime Order:** The partnership reaffirms opposition to unilateral attempts to alter the status quo by force or coercion, emphasizing resilient supply chains, freedom of navigation, and maritime security.



Essential Definitions

- **UNICORN (Unified Complex Radio Antenna):** An advanced integrated shipborne mast system (NORA-50) that consolidates multiple communication antennas into a composite stealth structure to reduce radar cross-section.
- **Reciprocal Logistics & Repair Facilities:** Bilateral arrangements allowing naval vessels to utilize each other's ports, dockyards, and maintenance facilities for replenishment, repair, and operational support.
- **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):** The effective understanding of anything associated with the global maritime domain that could impact security, safety, economy, or the environment.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA), 2020:** The foundational bilateral legal framework establishing seamless logistics support, supplies, and services between the Indian Armed Forces and the Japan Self-Defense Forces.
- **Article 51, Constitution of India:** Directs the State to promote international peace and security, foster respect for international law, and maintain just and honourable relations between nations.



- **Three Principles on Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology (Japan):** Relaxed Japanese legal policy framework enabling defense hardware and technology transfers to strategic security partners like India.
- **UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea), 1982:** Legal regime guaranteeing freedom of navigation, overflight, and peaceful maritime transit in international waters and exclusive economic zones.

Conclusion The India-Japan defence partnership has crossed a critical threshold, moving past broad political alignment toward tangible defense-industrial production, co-development, and maritime operational integration. Translating these strategic agreements into shared defense technology and operational readiness reinforces a free, open, and rules-based Indo-Pacific order.

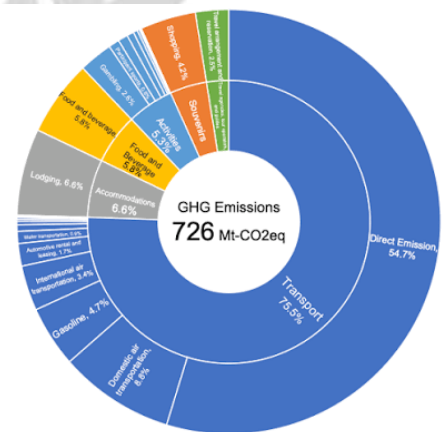
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its Neighborhood / Bilateral Relations, Groupings and Agreements involving India (India-Japan Strategic Partnership, Quad, Indo-Pacific Architecture).
- **GS Paper III:** Security Challenges and their Management in Border Areas, Indigenization of Technology and Developing New Technology in Defence ('Make in India' in Defence, UNICORN Transfer).
- **Key Focus:** ACSA Realization, Maritime Domain Awareness, Indo-Pacific Security Architecture.

12. How Can G20 Reduce CO₂ Emissions From Travel?

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Significant Emission Reduction Potential:** A Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) report reveals that combining hybrid work, higher car occupancy, and public bus adoption can reduce G20 passenger transport CO₂ emissions by up to 19.8% by 2050.
- **Volume of Mitigation:** This policy combination offers a reduction of 408 to 538 million tonnes of annual CO₂, equivalent to South Africa's entire annual CO₂ emissions footprint in 2024.
- **Impact of Equal Car Occupancy:** Achieving equal car occupancy alone can drive a 15.1% reduction in transport CO₂ emissions across G20 nations.
- **Role of Hybrid Work Models:** Integrating remote and hybrid work practices individually cuts travel-related carbon emissions by 11.8% by minimizing daily commuter demand.
- **Public Transit Integration:** Increasing public bus utilization contributes an additional 2.0% direct reduction, reinforcing the necessity of modal shifts toward mass transit systems.
- **Projected 2050 Baseline:** Expected baseline transport CO₂ emissions for G20 nations stand at 2,719 million tonnes by 2050 without intervention, emphasizing the urgency of structural demand-side interventions.



Essential Definitions

- **Demand-Side Climate Mitigation:** Measures focused on reducing the demand for carbon-intensive goods and services through behavioral shifts, systemic efficiency, and technology substitution.



- **Vehicle Occupancy Rate:** The average number of passengers traveling per motor vehicle, where higher occupancy reduces per-capita emissions per passenger-kilometer.
- **Modal Shift:** Transitioning travel behavior from private, carbon-heavy transport modes toward shared, public, or non-motorized transport alternatives.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 48A (Directive Principles):** Mandates the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duty):** Imposes a duty on every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, encompassing sustainable commuting choices.
- **Paris Agreement (Article 4):** Requires signatory nations, including G20 members, to establish Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) targeting economy-wide emission reductions.
- **National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP):** Indian policy framework prioritizing "people over vehicles" through investments in High-Capacity Public Transport Systems (HCPTS) and non-motorized transit.

Conclusion Reducing transport sector emissions across G20 economies requires moving beyond fuel efficiency toward behavioral and structural changes. Combining flexible work schedules with high-occupancy carpooling and expanded public transit systems offers a practical, high-impact pathway to meet long-term net-zero climate goals.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Environment & Sustainable Infrastructure (Climate Change Mitigation, Decarbonizing Transport, Urban Mobility, CEEW Insights, G20 NDCs).
- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings (G20 Climate Commitments, Global Environmental Governance).
- **Key Focus:** Demand-Side Mitigation, Urban Transport Reforms, Shared Mobility Models.

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