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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE:21/09/2026 (MONDAY)



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1. Exclusion of Kurmi Community from UCC & Demand for ST Status

Key Highlights & Summary

- Political statements highlight that the Kurmi community will be kept outside the purview of the proposed Uniform Civil Code (UCC).
- The Kurmis represent a significant agrarian community located predominantly in West Bengal's Jangalmahal region, extending into Jharkhand and Odisha.
- Currently categorized as Other Backward Class (OBC), the community is actively demanding Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.
- Kurmis are advocating for the recognition and inclusion of their native Kurmali language into the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution.
- State administration has committed to submitting a "Further Common Justification Report" to the Central Government to strengthen the case for their ST inclusion.
- The government has also promised the withdrawal of cases registered against community members during past agitations.

Essential Definitions

- **Uniform Civil Code (UCC):** A common set of civil laws governing personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, and succession for all citizens regardless of religion.
- **Scheduled Tribes (STs):** Socio-economically disadvantaged tribal communities designated under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution to receive affirmative action benefits and protection.
- **OBC (Other Backward Classes):** Group of social and educational backward classes designated under Article 342A to ensure reservation benefits in education and public employment.
- **Jangalmahal:** A forested geographical region spread across south-western districts of West Bengal, home to several indigenous communities.

Legal and Constitutional Framework



- **Article 44:** Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) instructing the State to endeavor to secure a Uniform Civil Code for citizens across India.
- **Article 342:** Outlines the procedure for the specification of Scheduled Tribes in relation to a State or Union Territory through a Presidential Order and subsequent Parliamentary amendment.
- **Article 342A:** Deals with the identification and notification of Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs/OBCs).
- **Eighth Schedule:** Contains the list of officially recognized national languages under Article 344(1) and Article 351 of the Constitution.
- **Fifth & Sixth Schedules:** Provide administrative autonomy and protection of customary traditional laws for tribal-dominated areas, which often exempts STs from standardized personal laws.

Conclusion

The demand for ST inclusion and exemption from the UCC highlights the complex intersection of customary practices, tribal identity, and federal policy. Balancing uniformity in civil laws while preserving indigenous cultures requires careful constitutional adherence and consensus.

UPSC Relevance

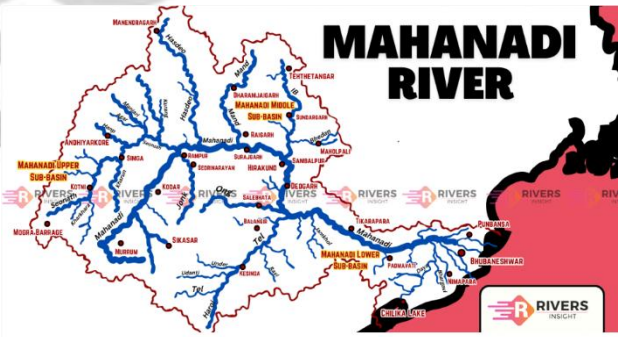
- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution (Articles 44, 342, Eighth Schedule), Statutory Bodies, Policies regarding Reservation, and Tribal Governance.
- **GS Paper I:** Indian Society, Pluralism, Social Empowerment, and Regional Movements.
- **Prelims Focus:** DPSP Article 44, Criteria for ST listing, Languages under the Eighth Schedule, and Geographical spread of Jangalmahal.

2. Mahanadi River Water Dispute Resolution

Key Highlights & Summary

- Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai stated that the longstanding Mahanadi water sharing dispute with Odisha is expected to be resolved soon.
- Both Odisha and Chhattisgarh governments have consented to abide by the decision formulated by the Central Water Commission (CWC) regarding water distribution.
- The political alignment at both the state levels and the Centre is expected to accelerate cooperative federalism and conflict resolution.
- High-level interactions between the Chief Ministers aimed to strengthen bilateral relations and advance regional welfare initiatives.
- Odisha's opposition parties have raised concerns regarding the equitable protection of Odisha's lower riparian water interests during bilateral negotiations.
- The Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal, constituted under central mandates, remains the formal adjudicating body alongside CWC technical interventions.

Essential Definitions



Mahanadi River System: Tributaries & Map of India

- **Inter-State River Water Dispute:** A formal dispute between two or more state governments regarding the use, distribution, or control of waters of an inter-state river or river valley.
- **Central Water Commission (CWC):** A premier technical organization in India functioning under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, responsible for initiating and coordinating water resource control, conservation, and utilization schemes.
- **Riparian Rights:** Legal entitlements of landowners or administrative territories adjoining a natural watercourse regarding the reasonable use of its water flow.
- **Mahanadi River Basin:** A major east-flowing peninsular river system originating in Dhamtari district (Chhattisgarh) and flowing through Odisha into the Bay of Bengal.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 262:** Empowers Parliament to enact laws for the adjudication of disputes relating to the use, distribution, or control of waters of inter-state rivers or river valleys.
- **Article 262(2):** Allows Parliament to bar the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court or any other court over such inter-state water disputes.
- **Inter-State River Water Disputes (ISRWD) Act, 1956:** Enacted under Article 262 to provide for the constitution of ad-hoc tribunals upon state request for resolving water conflicts.
- **Seventh Schedule (List II, Entry 17):** Grants states jurisdiction over water supplies, irrigation, canals, drainage, embankments, water storage, and water power.
- **Seventh Schedule (List I, Entry 56):** Grants the Union Parliament powers over the regulation and development of inter-state rivers and river valleys in the public interest.

Conclusion

Achieving an amicable resolution to the Mahanadi water sharing conflict through technical arbitration by the Central Water Commission marks a constructive step toward functional federalism. Balancing upper riparian upstream construction with lower riparian ecological and agricultural needs remains vital for long-term regional stability.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution, Interstate Relations, Federal Structure, Dispute Redressal Mechanisms, and Governance.
- **GS Paper I:** Indian Physical Geography, Major River Systems, and Drainage Patterns (Mahanadi River Basin).
- **Prelims Focus:** Article 262 provisions, ISRWD Act 1956 mechanisms, Mahanadi tributaries (Seonath, Hasdeo, Ib, Tel), and CWC functions.

3. Global Energy Crises and Sulphur Supply Disruptions: Impact on Indian Agriculture

Key Highlights & Summary

- Geopolitical conflicts in West Asia and Russia-Ukraine have targeted key energy infrastructures, causing major disruptions in global energy and fertilizer supply chains.
- While India successfully averted a food security threat by importing sufficient urea and liquefied natural gas (LNG), a severe surge in sulphur prices has emerged as a new challenge.
- Landed prices (cost plus ocean freight) of sulphur imported into India have more than doubled since the beginning of the year, reaching $1,050–1,100 per tonne.
- Global sulphur availability is hit hard due to drone and missile attacks on key gas processing facilities and oil refineries in Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia (Saudi Aramco), and Qatar (QatarEnergy).
- Sulphur is an essential raw material used in manufacturing key agricultural inputs such as di-ammonium phosphate (DAP), single super phosphate (SSP), and complex fertilizers.
- The steep cost spike in elemental sulphur threatens domestic production capacity and cost stability of non-urea complex fertilizers ahead of key cropping seasons.

Essential Definitions



- **Elemental Sulphur:** A secondary nutrient crucial for plant growth and a key chemical precursor derived primarily as a byproduct of natural gas processing and petroleum refining.
- **Di-ammonium Phosphate (DAP):** The second most consumed fertilizer in India after urea, providing nitrogen and phosphorus necessary for root development and crop yields.
- **Single Super Phosphate (SSP):** A multi-nutrient fertilizer containing phosphate, sulphur, and calcium, widely manufactured using sulfuric acid derived from elementary sulphur.
- **Landed Cost (C&F):** The overall price of an imported commodity delivered to its destination, including product cost and ocean freight fees.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Empowers the Union Government to regulate the production, supply, distribution, and pricing of essential commodities including fertilizers.
- **Fertilizer Control Order (FCO), 1985:** Administered under the Essential Commodities Act to enforce strict quality control, pricing standards, and distribution guidelines for chemical fertilizers across India.
- **Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme:** A centralized policy framework implemented via the Department of Fertilizers that provides fixed annual subsidies per kilogram on secondary and micronutrients, including sulphur (S), nitrogen (N), phosphate (P), and potash (K).
- **Article 39(b) of the Constitution:** Directive Principle guiding the State to ensure that ownership and control of material resources are distributed to best subserve the common good, applicable to national food security and farm input distribution.

Conclusion

Geopolitical vulnerabilities in global energy corridors underline the urgency of securing strategic mineral supply chains. Diversifying raw material imports, strengthening long-term bilateral trade agreements, and promoting nutrient-use efficiency are critical to safeguarding domestic fertilizer manufacturing and maintaining farm income stability.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies, Major Crop Patterns, Food Security, Supply Chain Management, and International Conflict Impacts on Economy.
- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and affecting India's interests (West Asia, Russia-Ukraine).
- **Prelims Focus:** Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS) Scheme, Role of Sulphur as a Macro/Micro Plant Nutrient, Chemical Inputs in DAP/SSP, and Essential Commodities Act provisions.

4. AASHVAST: Indian Army's High-Tech Labs to Counter Hardware Vulnerabilities

Key Highlights & Summary

- The Indian Army is setting up six specialized AASHVAST (Assessment and Analysis of Electronic Systems Hardware) laboratories across the country to secure defense hardware.
- Developed for the Directorate General of Electronics and Mechanical Engineering (DG EME), the system conducts mandatory firmware validation for drones and surveillance cameras.
- The initiative primarily aims to detect foreign hardware-level bugs, hidden commands, backdoors, and proprietary surveillance protocols.
- It addresses serious national security concerns regarding Chinese-origin electronic components integrated into unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) deployed along sensitive borders.
- The diagnostic suite checks for nearly 14 types of vulnerabilities, including geospatial geo-fencing bugs, hidden master passwords, and hardcoded remote control backdoors.
- This framework supports the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat by enforcing strict technological supply chain security and eliminating reliance on untrusted foreign supply nodes.

Essential Definitions



- **AASHVAST:** Assessment and Analysis of Electronic Systems Hardware for Vulnerabilities and Security Threats, a specialized firmware analysis and validation software suite.
- **Firmware:** Permanent software programmed into an electronic component's read-only memory that provides low-level control for the device's specific hardware operations.
- **Hardware Backdoor:** A covert method embedded directly into a microchip or electronic circuit that bypasses normal security authentication to allow unauthorized remote access.
- **Geospatial Vulnerability:** Embedded malicious code designed to cause a platform to malfunction, disable itself, or divert when operating within specific geographic coordinates.

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Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **National Cyber Security Policy:** Framework intended to build a secure cyberspace for citizens, businesses, and governance, including defense-critical infrastructure.
- **Defense Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020:** Guidelines governing defense procurement, emphasizing indigenous design, development, and manufacturing (IDDM) alongside stringent cyber audit norms.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000 (Section 70):** Grants power to notify Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) and mandate specialized security measures to protect national security.
- **Article 246 (Union List, Entry 1 & 2):** Grants the Parliament exclusive jurisdiction over Defense of India and Armed Forces regulation.

Conclusion

The establishment of AASHVAST labs represents a proactive shift toward comprehensive defense hardware sanitization and supply chain security. By bridging the gap in low-level firmware security, India significantly strengthens its operational readiness and cyber resilience in contested combat environments.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Challenges to Internal Security through Communication Networks, Role of Media and Social Networking Sites in Security Challenges, Basics of Cyber Security, and Security Challenges in Border Areas.
- **GS Paper III:** Indigenization of Technology and Developing New Technology in the Defense Sector (Atmanirbhar Bharat).
- **Prelims Focus:** Mandate of DG EME, concepts of Firmware vs Software vulnerabilities, defense procurement pathways, and hardware supply chain risks.

5. Doklam Standoff Fallout on ICBC India Operations and Cross-Border Financial Exposure

Key Highlights & Summary

- A confidential work summary revealed that the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC), China's largest state-owned bank, froze $185 million in approved loans in India during the 2017 Doklam military standoff.
- The bank's lone Indian branch in Mumbai proactively suspended disbursement across 11 approved loans and bond investments to hedge political and credit risks.
- ICBC instructed its internal Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cadres across all branch departments to maintain constant coordination with the Chinese Embassy and consulate during the standoff.
- Despite geopolitical tensions, ICBC India's total assets grew nearly five-fold over 11 years, rising from ₹1,386 crore in March 2015 to ₹6,378 crore as of March 31, 2026.



- The bank holds substantial investments totaling ₹3,522 crore, with ₹2,885 crore allocated in Indian government securities, alongside customer deposits of ₹4,194 crore.
- Investigations highlight how state-owned foreign financial institutions operate as instruments of geopolitical strategy, balancing commercial banking with political directives from home nations.

Essential Definitions

- **Industrial and Commercial Bank of China (ICBC):** A Chinese state-owned commercial bank and the world's largest bank by total assets, functioning under direct state supervision.

- **Doklam Standoff (2017):** A 73-day military border face-off between Indian Armed Forces and China's People's Liberation Army over Chinese road construction in disputed Doklam territory near the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction.
- **Undisbursed Loan Credit:** Approved credit lines or loan facilities committed by a banking institution that have not yet been drawn down or disbursed to the borrower.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Screening:** Legal and regulatory mechanisms implemented by a host nation to evaluate foreign capital inflows for national security risks.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Banking Regulation Act, 1949:** Empowers the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to license, inspect, regulate, and supervise branches of foreign commercial banks operating within Indian jurisdiction.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** Regulates cross-border capital flows, foreign investments, and external commercial borrowings (ECB) to safeguard financial stability.
- **Press Note 3 (2020 Amendment to FDI Policy):** Mandates prior government approval for all foreign investments originating from countries sharing a land border with India.
- **Article 246 (Union List, Entry 36 & 37):** Grants the Parliament of India exclusive power to legislate on foreign exchange, currency, coinage, and banking regulations.

Conclusion

The strategic weaponization of state-linked banking channels during geopolitical standoffs emphasizes the critical need for robust regulatory oversight over foreign financial institutions. Safeguarding national financial infrastructure against political risks requires strict compliance monitoring and strategic diversification of foreign capital sources.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to Mobilization of Resources, Banking System, Security Challenges and their Management in Border Areas, and Money-Laundering.
- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings involving India (India-China Relations), and Effect of Policies of Countries on India's Interests.
- **Prelims Focus:** Press Note 3 provisions, RBI powers under Banking Regulation Act 1949, FEMA regulations on ECBs, and geographic location of Doklam tri-junction.

6. Evolution and Strategic Legacy of India's Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW)

Key Highlights & Summary

- Established in 1968 under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, R&AW was created as India’s dedicated foreign intelligence agency following intelligence gaps exposed in the 1962 and 1965 wars.
- Founding chief Rameshwar Nath Kao designed the agency away from police-centric structures to focus on external intelligence, covert operations, and strategic analysis.
- R&AW provided critical pre-emptive intelligence during the 1971 war, intercepting Pakistani military communications and warning of air strikes in the western sector.
- Key institutional developments included strengthening the Aviation Research Centre (ARC) for aerial reconnaissance and forming the Special Frontier Force (SFF) for high-altitude border operations.

- Beyond tactical warfare, the agency influenced national policy, including advising leadership against signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to protect strategic sovereignty.
- Over decades, R&AW evolved into a core pillar of national security, institutionalizing strategic covert action, foreign intelligence gathering, and regional stability initiatives.

Essential Definitions

- **Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW):** India's primary external intelligence agency functioning directly under the Cabinet Secretariat.
- **Aviation Research Centre (ARC):** A specialized intelligence unit providing aerial surveillance, imagery intelligence, and border reconnaissance.
- **Special Frontier Force (SFF):** A specialized paramilitary force created post-1962, trained for high-altitude covert operations and border defense along contested frontiers.
- **Signals Intelligence (SIGINT):** Intelligence gathered through the interception of electronic signals and communications between foreign entities.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Executive Origin:** R&AW was created via an executive order under the Cabinet Secretariat rather than through a statutory act of Parliament.
- **Cabinet Secretariat Structure:** R&AW operates under the administrative control of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) via the Cabinet Secretary.
- **Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961:** Formally allocates the subject of external intelligence gathering and security assessment to the Cabinet Secretariat.
- **Article 73:** Executive power of the Union extends to matters with respect to which Parliament has power to make laws, providing the constitutional basis for executive intelligence bodies.

Conclusion

The genesis and growth of R&AW highlight the imperative of institutionalized external intelligence for safeguarding national integrity. Balancing executive discretion with statutory accountability remains central to refining modern intelligence architecture in an complex geopolitical matrix.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Security Challenges and their Management in Border Areas, Role of External State and Non-State Actors in Internal Security, and Structure of Security Agencies.
- **GS Paper II:** Governance, Executive Powers of the Cabinet Secretariat, and Formulation of Foreign Policy.
- **Prelims Focus:** Mandate of R&AW vs IB, administrative position under Cabinet Secretariat, historical context of ARC and SFF, and 1971 Strategic Operations.

7. Supreme Court Paradigm Shift: Anthropocentric to Ecocentric Environmental Jurisprudence

Key Highlights & Summary

- Supreme Court Justice B V Nagarathna highlighted the ongoing judicial transition from an anthropocentric to an ecocentric paradigm in Indian environmental jurisprudence.
- An ecocentric approach asserts that nature possesses intrinsic value independent of human utilitarian benefits, requiring humans to bear obligations toward non-human life.
- The address was delivered during an international conference titled "The Future of Environment and Climate Dynamics," organized by the National Green Tribunal (NGT).
- Environmental adjudication was described as an exercise in foresight that demands governing the present with acute awareness of future ecological impact.
- NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava emphasized building inclusive legal frameworks and institutional partnerships that protect vulnerable communities facing climate risks.
- Judicial trends increasingly require treating nature as an entity with rights rather than merely as property, commodity, or economic resource.

Aspects	Ecocentric (Traditional)	Anthropocentric (Modern)
Views of Nature	Nature = living and spiritual entities	Nature = economic resources
Disaster response	Spiritual, ethical, communal	Technical, legal, technological
Knowledge system	Local wisdom & oral tradition	Modern science & formal policy
Moral values	Alignment, balance	Exploitation, efficiency
Long-term impact	Socio-ecological resilience	Environmental and social crises

Essential Definitions

- **Anthropocentrism:** A human-centered ethical viewpoint that places human beings at the center of moral consideration, viewing nature solely through its utility to humanity.
- **Ecocentrism:** A nature-centered value system that recognizes intrinsic value in all ecosystems, natural entities, and species, regardless of human utility.
- **Environmental Jurisprudence:** The body of legal principles, philosophy, and judicial precedent built around protecting nature and regulating human interaction with the environment.
- **Substantive Environmental Equality:** A legal principle insisting that environmental governance must account for differentiated social impacts and protect marginalized groups from disproportionate environmental harm.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 21:** Right to Life, interpreted by the Supreme Court to include the fundamental right to a clean, healthy, and pollution-free environment (M.C. Mehta v. Union of India).
- **Article 48A:** Directive Principle mandating that the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife.
- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental Duty making it the duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment and to have compassion for living creatures.
- **National Green Tribunal Act, 2010:** Establishes the NGT for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and natural resources.

- **Public Trust Doctrine:** Legal principle holding that resources like air, sea, waters, and forests are held by the government in trust for the public and non-human entities.

Conclusion

Transitioning from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism strengthens the judicial framework needed to fight modern ecological degradation. Granting intrinsic value to natural ecosystems aligns constitutional duties with sustainable development, ensuring intergenerational climate equity.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Judiciary, Development Processes, Important Aspects of Governance, Role of Statutory Bodies (NGT), and Fundamental Rights/Duties.
- **GS Paper III:** Environment Conservation, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Climate Change Dynamics, and Sustainable Development.
- **Prelims Focus:** DPSP Article 48A vs Fundamental Duty 51A(g), NGT Act 2010 provisions, Public Trust Doctrine, and landmark Supreme Court environmental judgements.

8. Jaishankar to Raise US Russia Sanctions Bill at UNGA Session

Key Highlights & Summary

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is set to attend the High-Level Week of the 81st United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session in New York, scheduled to deliver the national statement on September 26.
- A major bilateral focus of the visit includes addressing Indian concerns over the newly enacted US legislation (Lindsey O. Graham Sanctioning Russia and Iran Act of 2026) that allows the US to impose secondary sanctions and up to 100% tariffs on Russian energy trading partners.
- India reaffirmed its firm commitment to maintaining its energy security for 1.4 billion citizens while warning Washington that punitive secondary trade measures could adversely affect the bilateral relationship.



- Strategic engagements occur alongside ongoing negotiations to finalize a bilateral trade agreement between New Delhi and Washington DC.
- The 81st UNGA session is being presided over by Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman amid complex global conflicts, including escalating disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz impacting energy access for the Global South.
- Broad diplomatic outreach includes bilateral and plurilateral meetings with US counterparts and key foreign leaders on the sidelines of the General Debate.

Essential Definitions

- **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA):** The main policy-making and representative organ of the UN, comprising all 193 member states, providing a universal platform for multilateral negotiations.
- **Secondary Sanctions:** Measures directed by a country against non-domestic entities or third-party nations to restrict them from engaging in economic transactions with a primary targeted country.

- **Energy Security:** The uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price, vital for domestic economic stability and human development.
- **Global South:** A broad term referring to developing, emerging, and low-income nations across Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania that face shared socio-economic challenges.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51(c) & (d):** Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) encouraging the promotion of international peace, security, foster respect for international law, and settlement of international disputes by arbitration.
- **Article 253:** Grants the Parliament exclusive legislative authority to enact laws for implementing international treaties, agreements, or conventions with foreign nations.
- **Government of India Allocation of Business Rules:** Allocates the conduct of foreign affairs, bilateral relations, and international treaty obligations to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- **Unilateral Sanctions vs International Law:** Principle under the UN Charter where sanctions lacking UN Security Council (UNSC) authorization are viewed as extraterritorial measures violating state sovereignty.

Conclusion

India's proactive diplomatic engagement at the UNGA underscores its commitment to strategic autonomy amidst escalating geopolitical pressures. Navigating secondary trade measures while safeguarding national energy security remains critical to sustaining domestic growth and preserving balanced foreign relations.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its Neighborhood- Relations, Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India, Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed Countries on India's Interests.
- **GS Paper II:** Important International Institutions, their Structure, Mandate, and Operational Framework (UNGA, UNSC).
- **Prelims Focus:** Mandate of UNGA, DPSP Article 51 provisions, Secondary Sanctions vs Primary Sanctions, and geography of strategic choke points (Strait of Hormuz).

9. Counter-Insurgency Operations and Security Architecture in the Pir Panjal Range

Key Highlights & Summary

- Security forces executed a sustained four-month joint counter-terrorism operation in the upper reaches of the Pir Panjal range, neutralizing foreign terrorists along strategic transit routes.
- A major operational shift involves establishing Temporary Operational Bases (TOBs) across difficult mountainous terrain to maintain an extended footprint ranging from 10 days to several months.
- Security deployment is structured across three elevation zones: elite Paratroopers in upper reaches, Rashtriya Rifles in middle ranges, and J&K Police with Paramilitary forces in lower ranges.
- Special Operations Group (SOG) of J&K Police introduced dedicated high-altitude combat units, including 'Snow Leopards' for winter mountain warfare and 'Markhors' for dense forest combat.

- Advanced surveillance gear, night-vision devices, and modern weaponry are deployed to deny militants positional advantages and counter infiltration between the Kashmir Valley and Jammu region (Poonch-Rajouri axis).
- Operational challenges persist due to evolving over-ground worker (OGW) networks, foreign militant infiltration, and complex natural cave hideouts across dense forest tracts.

Essential Definitions



- **Temporary Operational Bases (TOBs):** Tactical tactical outposts established in remote, high-altitude terrain to maintain continuous vigilance and prevent terrorist movement across mountain passes.
- **Rashtriya Rifles (RR):** A specialized counter-insurgency force of the Indian Army raised specifically for anti-terrorist operations in Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Special Operations Group (SOG):** The elite elite anti-terrorist wing of the Jammu and Kashmir Police trained for specialized tactical operations and urban/mountain combat.
- **Over-Ground Workers (OGWs):** Non-combatant support networks that provide logistical assistance, intelligence, shelter, and transit routes to militant organizations.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), 1958/1990:** Grants special operational powers to the Armed Forces in designated disturbed areas to conduct searches, arrests, and maintain public order.
- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967:** Primary anti-terror legislation enabling the designation of individuals and organizations as terrorists and providing stringent counter-terrorism enforcement mechanisms.
- **Article 355:** Mandates that it shall be the duty of the Union to protect every State against external aggression and internal disturbance.
- **Seventh Schedule (List II, Entry 1 & 2):** Grants state governments jurisdiction over Public Order and Police, operating alongside Union national security mandates.

Conclusion

The transition toward continuous deployment via Temporary Operational Bases in the Pir Panjal range demonstrates adaptive military strategy against hybrid security threats. Strengthening intelligence-led operations and disrupting support ecosystems are fundamental to securing strategic transit corridors in Jammu and Kashmir.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Security Challenges and their Management in Border Areas, Role of External State and Non-State Actors, and Various Security Forces and Agencies and their Mandate.
- **GS Paper II:** Linkages between Development and Spread of Extremism, and Constitutional Provisions governing National Security (Article 355).

- **Prelims Focus:** Geography of Pir Panjal range (passes and regional connectivity between Jammu and Kashmir Valley), structure of Rashtriya Rifles, and statutory provisions under UAPA and AFSPA.

10. Expansion of Project Cheetah: Female Cheetah Relocated to Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary

Key Highlights & Summary

- Under Project Cheetah, a three-year-old female cheetah named CCB-2, originally imported from Botswana, was released into the Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary after being relocated from Kuno National Park.
- The addition brings the total cheetah population in Gandhi Sagar to four (two males and two females), establishing the sanctuary as India's second functional cheetah habitat after Kuno National Park.
- Located across the Mandsaur-Neemuch region along the Madhya Pradesh-Rajasthan border, Gandhi Sagar provides an alternative metapopulation habitat to reduce overcrowding at Kuno.
- Wildlife authorities anticipate the move will facilitate breeding, as the previously existing female cheetah at the site had not successfully mated with the resident males.
- Simultaneously, an India-born female cheetah (KGP12) gave birth to four cubs at Kuno National Park, marking the arrival of a second-generation cheetah lineage born on Indian soil.
- These conservation milestones have expanded India’s overall cheetah population to 56 individuals, reinforcing long-term efforts to restore the extinct apex predator to Asian grasslands.

Essential Definitions

- **Project Cheetah:** World's first intercontinental wild carnivore translocation project, aimed at reintroducing African cheetahs (*Acinonyx jubatus*) to restore India's savannah and grassland ecosystems.
- **Metapopulation Management:** A conservation strategy involving controlled human-assisted movements of individuals between geographically separated populations to maintain genetic diversity and prevent localized extinction.
- **Asian Asiatic Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus venaticus*):** The sub-species of cheetah declared officially extinct in India in 1952, currently surviving only in critically low numbers in Iran.
- **Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary:** A protected grassland and open forest ecosystem situated along the Chambal River basin in northern Madhya Pradesh.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 (Schedule I):** Grants the highest level of legal protection to cheetahs in India, prohibiting hunting and commercial trade with stringent penalties for violations.
- **CITES (Appendix I):** Regulates international trade in cheetah specimens, ensuring that cross-border biological transfers between nations adhere strictly to non-commercial, conservation-oriented mandates.
- **Article 48A:** Directive Principle of State Policy obligating the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the nation's forests and wildlife.

- **Article 51A(g):** Fundamental Duty requiring citizens to protect natural environments, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife, and to display compassion for living creatures.



Conclusion

The successful establishment of a second metapopulation node at Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary represents a crucial phase in establishing viable, self-sustaining cheetah populations. Managing multi-site habitats mitigates disease risks, minimizes intra-species conflicts, and furthers grassland biodiversity restoration.

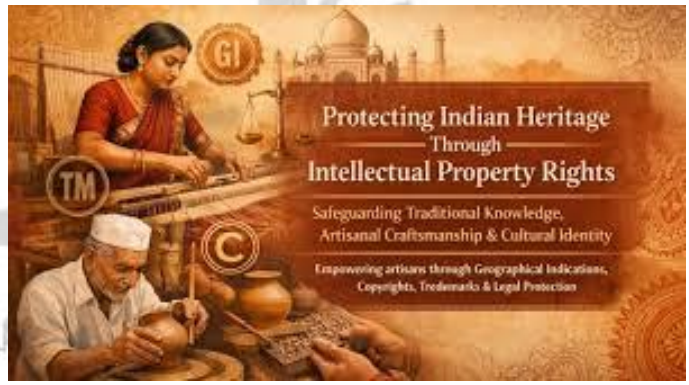
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Environment, Ecology, Biodiversity Conservation, Environmental Impact Assessment, and Species Reintroduction Initiatives.
- **GS Paper II:** Statutory and Regulatory Bodies in Wildlife Governance (NTCA, WCCB) and Constitutional DPSPs/Fundamental Duties.
- **Prelims Focus:** IUCN status of African vs Asiatic Cheetah, geography of Gandhi Sagar and Kuno National Parks, Chambal river basin, and provisions of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972.

11. Cultural Misappropriation of Indian Crafts and Intellectual Property Rights

Key Highlights & Summary

- Global luxury brands like Ralph Lauren and Fendi face scrutiny for culturally appropriating traditional Indian crafts like Aari embroidery and mirror-work without credit or origin attribution.
- A fundamental mismatch exists because traditional Intellectual Property (IP) laws recognize individual ownership, whereas traditional Indian crafts are held collectively across generations.



- While Geographical Indications (GI) protect names and regional reputation, they often fail to safeguard individual motifs, stitches, or visual elements from cross-border commercial exploitation.
- Artisans and rural craft communities lack the financial and legal resources required to monitor, enforce, and litigate IP rights against multinational corporations abroad.
- Experts advocate establishing legal recognition of community custodianship along with digital registries to document historical provenance, motifs, and traditional techniques.
- Global frameworks under the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) are shifting toward recognizing traditional knowledge and establishing fair benefit-sharing mechanisms.

Essential Definitions

- **Cultural Misappropriation:** The unauthorized or unacknowledged adoption of traditional knowledge, designs, or cultural expressions of a community by outside entities for commercial gain.

- **Geographical Indication (GI):** A legal designation identifying a product as originating from a specific geographical territory, possessing qualities or reputation attributable to that origin.
- **Community Custodianship:** A legal principle granting collective rights and governance over traditional knowledge to the community that sustained and transmitted the craft.
- **Traditional Knowledge (TK):** Knowledge, know-how, skills, and practices developed, sustained, and passed down through generations within a specific community.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999:** Provides for the registration and protection of GI tags for goods, granting registered proprietors and authorized users exclusive rights.
- **Copyright Act, 1957:** Protects original artistic and literary works, though often inadequate for centuries-old collective traditional art forms lacking individual authors.
- **WIPO Treaty on IP, Genetic Resources, and Associated Traditional Knowledge (2024):** International agreement addressing IP protections, attribution, and benefit-sharing for traditional knowledge systems.
- **Article 29(1):** Fundamental Right protecting the rights of citizens having a distinct language, script, or culture to conserve the same.
- **Article 49:** Directive Principle guiding the State to protect monuments, places, and objects of artistic or historic interest.

Conclusion

Protecting traditional Indian crafts requires moving beyond standard IP frameworks to embrace collective custodianship and digital provenance registries. Establishing robust international rules and community capacity will secure fair remuneration and preserve cultural heritage without stifling creative innovation.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Indian Culture, Salient Aspects of Art Forms, Literature, and Architecture from Ancient to Modern Times, Preservation of Heritage.
- **GS Paper III:** Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Issues, Geographical Indications, and Protection of Traditional Knowledge.
- **Prelims Focus:** Provisions of the GI Act 1999, WIPO treaties on traditional knowledge, Article 29(1), and prominent GI-tagged crafts of India (e.g., Kolhapuri chappals, Aari work).

VIDHVATH IAS ACADEMY

12. Navigating the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) Amendment Bill 2026

Key Highlights & Summary

- The proposed FCRA Amendment Bill, 2026 introduces strict oversight, mandating that upon cancellation, surrender, or non-renewal of an FCRA certificate, foreign contributions and created assets will provisionally vest in a government-appointed "designated authority".
- Permanent vesting occurs if registration is not restored within the prescribed period, allowing the authority to transfer assets to government departments or sell them, crediting proceeds to the Consolidated Fund of India.

- Primary governmental concerns center around opaque foreign capital flows bypassing state accounting to fund politically charged campaigns, selective local advocacy, and forced religious conversions.
- Civil society organizations and minority-run institutions express concern over potential non-neutral enforcement, which could severely disrupt social welfare, education, and healthcare in remote areas.
- Over 22,000 FCRA registrations have been cancelled since 2015, leaving around 14,400 active associations eligible to receive foreign funding.
- The legislation highlights the urgent need to diversify domestic philanthropy through corporate social responsibility (CSR) and private giving to reduce foreign dependency while maintaining a vibrant civil society.

Essential Definitions

- **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA):** A statutory framework enacted to regulate the acceptance and utilization of foreign donations to prevent activities detrimental to national interest and sovereignty.
- **Designated Authority:** A government-appointed body empowered under the 2026 Bill to take provisional possession, manage, or dispose of foreign-funded assets of non-compliant entities.
- **Consolidated Fund of India:** The primary government fund established under Article 266(1), into which all government revenues, loans raised, and asset liquidation proceeds are credited.
- **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** A statutory mandate requiring eligible companies to spend a minimum portion of their net profits on social and environmental development initiatives.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 19(1)(c):** Fundamental Right guaranteeing citizens the freedom to form associations or unions, subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(4) in the interest of public order, sovereignty, and integrity of India.
- **Article 26:** Right of religious denominations to establish and maintain institutions for religious and charitable purposes and manage their own affairs in matters of religion.
- **Article 266(1):** Governs the Consolidated Fund of India, specifying the legal mechanism for depositing public revenues and liquidating assets vested in the state.
- **Companies Act, 2013 (Section 135):** Mandates compulsory CSR spending of 2% of average net profits for qualifying corporations, bolstering domestic social sector partnerships.

Conclusion

Balancing national security with civil society autonomy requires robust, transparent regulatory mechanisms without impeding legitimate developmental work. Expanding Indian domestic philanthropy and corporate CSR partnerships offers a sustainable path to reduce foreign funding dependencies while safeguarding constitutional freedoms.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Development Processes and the Development Industry—the Role of NGOs, SHGs, Various Groups and Associations, Statutory, Regulatory, and Various Quasi-judicial Bodies.

- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security Challenges, Role of External State and Non-state Actors in Creating Challenges to Internal Security, Money Laundering and its Prevention.
- **Prelims Focus:** Statutory provisions of FCRA 2010 and 2026 Amendments, Article 19(1)(c), Article 26, Article 266(1), Section 135 of Companies Act 2013, and mechanisms governing the Consolidated Fund of India.

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