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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 22/10/2026 (THURSDAY)



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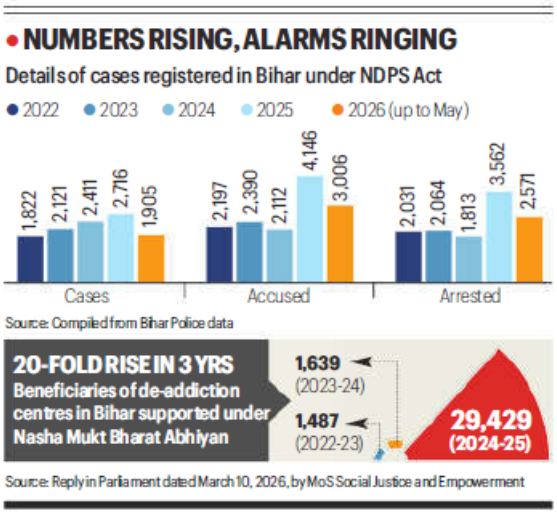
1. Rise of Substance Abuse in Post-Prohibition Bihar

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Surge in Narcotics Post-Prohibition:** A decade after Bihar introduced strict liquor prohibition, an alarming surge in drug abuse has emerged as an unintended consequence, stretching security and public health infrastructures.
- **Escalating NDPS Cases:** According to Bihar Police data, cases registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act quadrupled over six years, rising from 697 in 2019 to 1,905 in the first five months of 2026 alone.
- **Shift to Synthetic & Compact Drugs:** Enforcement focus on alcohol smuggling has pushed illegal trade toward compact, high-value substances like heroin, synthetic pills, pharmaceutical vials, and a local variant termed "kota".
- **Impact on Juvenile Crime & Health:** Police express deep concern over drug abuse fueling juvenile delinquency, while treatment facilities struggle to keep pace with demand.
- **Inadequate Rehabilitation Infrastructure:** Centrally supported de-addiction facilities operate in less than one-third of Bihar's districts, despite beneficiary counts under Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan surging to 29,429 in 2024-25.
- **Policy Displacement Effect:** The phenomenon highlights policy displacement where strict bans on one substance lead users to shift to deadlier, unregulated alternatives.

Essential Definitions

- **Narcotic Drugs:** Natural or synthetic substances that induce sleep, relieve pain, or dull senses, such as opium, morphine, and heroin.
- **Psychotropic Substances:** Natural or synthetic substances that alter mental processes, mood, or behavior, including amphetamines, tranquilizers, and LSD.
- **Prohibition:** A complete statutory or legal ban on the manufacture, sale, possession, and consumption of alcoholic beverages.
- **Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan (NMBA):** A flagship initiative launched by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment aimed at creating awareness and providing rehabilitation for substance abuse across vulnerable districts in India.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 47):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to bring about prohibition of the consumption of intoxicating drinks and drugs which are injurious to health except for medicinal purposes.
- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985:** The primary statutory mechanism regulating cultivation, production, transport, possession, and trade of narcotics, prescribing stringent penalties for illicit trafficking.

- **State Police Powers (Seventh Schedule):** 'Public order' and 'Police' fall under Entry 1 and 2 of the State List, placing law enforcement and state-level prohibition execution under provincial governance.
- **National Policy on Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances:** Outlines a multi-pronged strategy combining supply reduction (enforcement), demand reduction (awareness/education), and harm reduction (treatment and rehabilitation).

Conclusion

The drug surge in Bihar demonstrates the limits of law enforcement-centric prohibition without parallel demand-reduction and socio-economic support systems. Addressing the crisis requires expanding rehabilitation infrastructure, strengthening inter-state border surveillance, and adopting a public health approach to addiction.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Governance, Policy Implementation Challenges, Issues Arising out of Design and Implementation of Public Policies (Alcohol Prohibition vs. Substance Abuse).
- **GS Paper III:** Internal Security, Organised Crime and Drug Trafficking Nexus, Role of State Agencies in Enforcement.
- **GS Paper IV:** Ethics and Human Interface, Social Stigma, Rehabilitation, and State Responsibility toward Public Health.

2. IIT Madras Launches UDYOG Finishing School to Bridge Skill Gap

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Launch of UDYOG Initiative:** IIT Madras launched an industry-oriented finishing school called UDYOG (Upskilling and Development for Young Graduates) to address the shortage of skilled workforce in biotechnology and biomanufacturing sectors.
- **Bridging Academia-Industry Gap:** The initiative aims to equip young graduates with practical skills and professional competencies required to meet real-world industrial demands.
- **Structured Three-Stage Pathway:** The curriculum follows a 3-stage model, starting with 3 months of online learning delivered via the Centre for Outreach and Digital Education (CODE) with lectures from industry experts.
- **Hands-on Training at Biofoundry:** The second phase includes a 4-week intensive practical training program at the institute's newly launched Biofoundry to familiarize students with lab processes and manufacturing workflows.
- **Industry Engagement and Placement Pathways:** Selected participants will receive opportunities to engage with industry partners, undergo interviews, and secure long-term internships.
- **Integration with Modern Tech & AI:** The initiative highlights the necessity of incorporating Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cross-disciplinary expertise into conventional science and engineering education.

Essential Definitions

- **Finishing School:** A specialized educational institution or training program designed to prepare students for professional careers by imparting practical, technical, and soft skills needed in the workforce.

- **Biofoundry:** An integrated facility that automates and accelerates the design, build, and test cycles of biological systems for industrial, medical, and agricultural applications.
- **Biomanufacturing:** The use of biological systems, such as living cells or microorganisms, to manufacture biological molecules, pharmaceuticals, materials, and industrial products.
- **Academia-Industry Linkage:** Collaborative partnerships between educational institutions and industrial sectors to align academic curricula with job market requirements and foster technological innovation.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** Emphasizes integration of vocational training, skill development, hands-on learning, and industry participation into mainstream higher education curriculum.
- **National Skill Development Mission (NSDM):** Framework aimed at creating opportunities, space, and scope for the development of talents of Indian youth and developing skill-sets across emerging industries.
- **Biotechnology Research Innovation and Entrepreneurship Development (Bio-RIDE) Scheme:** Central scheme promoting research, development, biomanufacturing, and skill acquisition to boost India's bio-economy.
- **Entry 66 of Union List (Seventh Schedule):** Grants Parliament jurisdiction over coordination and determination of standards in institutions for higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions.

Conclusion

The UDYOG initiative by IIT Madras presents a pragmatic model to solve India's skill mismatch in advanced sectors like biotechnology. Scaling such academia-industry models nation-wide is essential for realizing India's target of building a $300 billion bio-economy by 2030.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Governance, Government Policies and Interventions for Development in Various Sectors, Issues Relating to Development and Management of Education and Human Resources.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy (Employment, Skill Development), Science & Technology (Biotechnology, Artificial Intelligence, and Biomanufacturing applications).

3. Enforcement of Stage 1 GRAP as Delhi Air Quality Deteriorates

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Invocation of Stage 1 GRAP:** The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) invoked Stage 1 of the revised Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) across the National Capital Region (NCR) after Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) dropped to 244 ('poor' category), its worst in 100 days.
- **Seasonal Air Deterioration:** The air quality degradation is driven by post-monsoon weather transition, low wind speeds (under 10 km/h), festive firework emissions, vehicular exhaust, and rising farm fires in neighboring states.
- **Strict Dust & Construction Control:** Dust suppression measures have been intensified, including mechanized road sweeping, water sprinkling via anti-smog guns, and stopping work on unregistered construction plots over 500 sq m.

- **Traffic & Vehicular Regulations:** CAQM mandated strict enforcement of Pollution Under Control (PUC) norms, impounding over-age vehicles, diverting non-destined truck traffic to expressways, and restricting inter-state buses to electric, CNG, or BS-VI diesel models.
- **Ban on Unregulated Fuels:** Open burning of solid waste and the use of coal or firewood in eateries, hotels, and open eateries across the NCR have been strictly prohibited.
- **Stubble Burning Impact:** Satellite monitoring by IARI detected farm fires across northern states, with stubble burning currently contributing around 4% to Delhi's PM2.5 pollution, expected to rise up to 15%.

Essential Definitions

- **Air Quality Index (AQI):** A standardized numerical indicator used to communicate daily air quality levels and associated health risks to the public; Stage 1 GRAP applies when AQI is between 201 and 300 ('poor').
- **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP):** A set of emergency anti-air pollution measures implemented in stages across the Delhi-NCR region depending on the severity of air pollution.
- **Particulate Matter (PM2.5 & PM10):** Fine inhalable solid particles or liquid droplets in the air with diameters of 2.5 micrometers or 10 micrometers and smaller, causing severe cardiovascular and respiratory health risks.
- **Temperature Inversion:** A meteorological phenomenon during winter where a layer of warm air traps cooler air and atmospheric pollutants near the earth's surface, preventing their dispersion.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 21 of the Indian Constitution:** Guarantees the Right to Life and Personal Liberty, which the Supreme Court has expanded to include the right to clean air and a healthy environment (*Subhash Kumar v. State of Bihar, 1991*).
- **Article 48A & Article 51A(g):** Constitutional mandates directing the State to protect and improve the environment, and establishing a fundamental duty for citizens to safeguard the natural environment.
- **Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021:** Statutory body established for better coordination, research, identification, and resolution of air quality issues in the NCR and adjoining areas.
- **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981:** Statutory mechanism empowering Central and State Pollution Control Boards to enforce standards, inspect industrial units, and prohibit polluting fuels.

Conclusion

The activation of GRAP Stage 1 highlights the recurring winter air pollution crisis in Northern India. Long-term mitigation requires moving beyond emergency responses toward structural reforms in agricultural waste management, regional public transport expansion, and transition to cleaner industrial energy sources.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (CAQM), Government Policies and Interventions for Environmental Protection.

- **GS Paper III:** Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Conservation, Impacts of Urbanization, and Sustainable Agricultural Practices.

4. NHPC Seeks Forest Clearance for Kamala Hydel Project in Arunachal Pradesh

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Large-scale Forest Diversion Proposal:** State-run NHPC Limited has sought approval from the Union Environment Ministry to divert 3,278 hectares of dense high-conservation forest across Kra Daadi, Kurung Kumey, and Kamle districts in Arunachal Pradesh.
- **Scale of Felling and Project Details:** The proposed 1,720 MW Kamala Hydroelectric Project on the Kamala River (a right-bank tributary of Subansiri River) involves felling approximately 23.4 lakh trees and constructing a 216-metre-high concrete gravity dam.
- **Compensatory Afforestation Outside State:** Due to high forest cover in Arunachal Pradesh, compensatory afforestation of 7,018 hectares across degraded land in Madhya Pradesh has been proposed under provisions of forest conservation rules.
- **Ecological Impact on Wildlife:** Though not in protected reserves, the Environment Ministry's Shillong regional office noted that submergence will fragment habitats and disrupt wildlife migration across river banks, necessitating a comprehensive mitigation plan.
- **Socio-Economic Displacement:** According to the Social Impact Assessment report, the Rs 2,400-crore project will directly affect 5,440 families across 126 villages in the hilly Kamala River valley.
- **Appraisal by Forest Advisory Committee:** The Ministry's Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) is scheduled to appraise the forest diversion proposal for prior approval.

Essential Definitions

- **Forest Diversion:** The legal authorization granted by the Central Government to use designated forest land for non-forestry infrastructure projects.
- **Compensatory Afforestation:** Mandatory planting of trees over non-forest land or degraded forest land to offset forest cover lost due to developmental activities.
- **Forest Advisory Committee (FAC):** A statutory advisory body under the Environment Ministry that reviews proposals seeking forest land diversion for industrial or infrastructure purposes.
- **Run-of-the-River Project:** A type of hydroelectric generation plant where minimal water storage or reservoir capacity is created, relying primarily on the natural flow of the river.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 / Van (Samrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam:** Regulates the diversion of forest lands for non-forest purposes, requiring prior approval from the Central Government and statutory compensatory afforestation.
- **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986:** Empowers the Union Government to mandate Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and issue environmental clearances for major infrastructure and river valley projects.

- **Article 48A of the Indian Constitution:** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Article 51A(g):** Establishes a fundamental duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.

Conclusion

The Kamala Hydel Project underscores the ongoing dilemma between expanding renewable energy capacity and preserving delicate Eastern Himalayan biodiversity. Balancing energy needs with ecological integrity requires strict implementation of mitigation plans, fair community rehabilitation, and genuine compensatory afforestation.

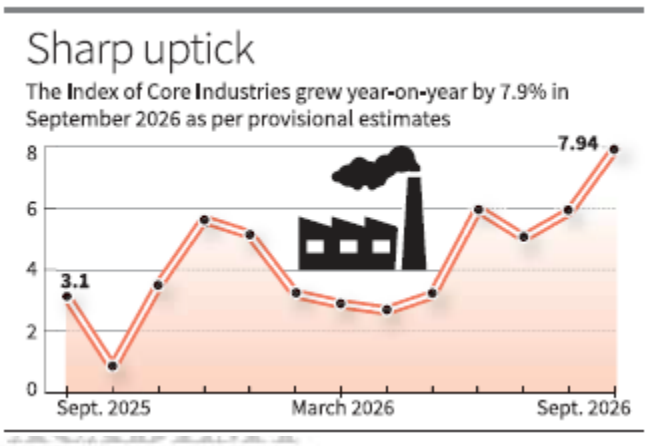
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Government Policies and Interventions for Development, Issues Arising out of Design and Implementation.
- **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure (Energy, Hydroelectric Power), Conservation, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), Biodiversity Loss, and Disaster Management (Dam Safety).

5. Core Industries Register Record Growth of 7.9% in September 2026

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Historic Growth Peak:** The Index of Core Industries (ICI) surged by 7.9% year-on-year in September 2026, marking the highest growth rate recorded under the current data series.
- **Primary Key Drivers:** The uptick was primarily driven by strong rebounds in coal (10.7%), refinery products (10.3%), and iron ore (18.4%), supported by low base effects and low coal stocks at thermal power stations.
- **Performance of Infrastructure Sectors:** Construction-related sectors maintained solid momentum, with steel output expanding by 4.9%, cement growing by 9.8%, and electricity generation maintaining healthy double-digit growth at 11.4%.



- **Persistent Sectoral Contractions:** Despite overall growth, domestic crude oil (-1.4%), natural gas (-4.6%), and fertilizer sectors (-11.7%) continued to contract, with fertilizers marking seven consecutive months of decline.
- **Industrial Context:** This growth represents a significant recovery from previous months, serving as a positive indicator for overall industrial output measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- **Energy Demand Dynamic:** The sharp increase in coal and electricity production underscores persistent domestic energy demand and accelerated thermal power generation requirements.

Essential Definitions

- **Index of Core Industries (ICI):** A monthly production index measuring the collective performance of eight core infrastructure sectors in India, evaluated and published by the Office of the Economic Adviser, DPIIT.

- **Eight Core Sectors:** Comprises Refinery Products, Electricity, Steel, Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Cement, and Fertilizers, which together constitute 40.27% of the total weight in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- **Base Effect:** The influence of the comparison period's baseline level on current percentage growth calculations, where a low baseline artificially elevates current growth rates.
- **Index of Industrial Production (IIP):** An indicator measuring short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products across manufacturing, mining, and electricity over a given period.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT):** Operates under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as the primary nodal agency for compiling and releasing ICI data.
- **National Policy on Statistics:** Ensures transparent, reliable, and timely official statistical data generation under the administrative umbrella of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- **Seventh Schedule (Union List):** Entry 52 empowers the Central Parliament to regulate industries declared by law to be expedient in the public interest.
- **National Manufacturing Policy:** Strategic framework intended to increase the share of manufacturing in gross domestic product (GDP) and enhance global competitiveness across core sectors.

Conclusion

The record performance of the core sector indicates robust underlying economic momentum driven by infrastructure activities and industrial power demand. However, sustained long-term industrial health necessitates resolving continuous contraction in domestic energy production and fertilizer manufacturing.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and Issues Relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development, and Employment.
- **GS Paper III:** Industrial Growth, Index of Industrial Production (IIP), Core Infrastructure Development, and Energy Security.

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6. ASI Begins Fresh Excavation at Kashipur: Uncovering Ancient Historical and Cultural Links

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Fresh Archaeological Excavation:** The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) Dehradun Circle has initiated fresh excavations at a 90-acre mound near Drona Sagar in Kashipur, Uttarakhand, running through March.
- **Mahabharata and Mythological Association:** Local tradition links Kashipur as the residence and training ground of Sage Dronacharya, with the Pandavas traditionally believed to have built Drona Sagar Lake as *guru dakshina*.
- **Historical Identification as Govisana:** Kashipur was identified by Alexander Cunningham as 'Govisana' or 'Kiu-pi-shwang-na', a prominent site recorded by 7th-century Chinese traveler Xuanzang.

- **Continuous Multi-Period Occupation:** Pottery evidence reveals continuous human habitation extending from the Painted Grey Ware (PGW) period through Northern Black Polished Ware, Kushan, Gupta, and early medieval eras.
- **Temple Architecture and Phased Structures:** Previous ASI excavations (1939-40, 1965-66, 1970-71) revealed a large brick-built temple structure constructed in three distinct phases, beginning with a Gupta-era high platform.
- **Focus on Cultural Sequencing:** The current scientific investigation aims to establish a complete cultural sequence of the site, dig deeper, and verify findings to promote heritage tourism and historical research.

Essential Definitions

- **Govisana:** The ancient historical name for modern Kashipur, documented by Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang and identified in modern times by Sir Alexander Cunningham.
- **Painted Grey Ware (PGW) Culture:** An Iron Age culture of the Gangetic plain (c. 1200 BCE to 600 BCE), characterized by fine grey pottery with painted geometric patterns, often associated with Mahabharata-era settlements.
- **Cultural Sequencing:** The chronological arrangement of material remains and strata at an archaeological site to trace successive historical periods of human occupation.
- **Sanctum (Garbhagriha):** The innermost shrine of a Hindu temple housing the principal deity, which in early Gupta architecture began as a simple square chamber.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 49 of the Indian Constitution:** Directs the State to protect every monument, place, or object of artistic or historic interest declared to be of national importance from spoliation, disfigurement, or destruction.
- **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958:** The principal legislation regulating archaeological excavations, preservation of ancient monuments, and protection of historical sites across India.
- **Seventh Schedule (Concurrent List, Entry 40):** Places archaeological sites and remains, other than those declared by Parliament to be of national importance, under joint legislative authority of Union and States.
- **ASI Mandate:** Functions as an attached office under the Ministry of Culture, responsible for archaeological research and protection of cultural heritage.

Conclusion

The renewed excavations at Kashipur hold immense potential to bridge legendary narratives with empirical archaeological science. Establishing a clear cultural sequence will deepen our understanding of ancient Northern Indian urbanism and multi-period architectural evolution.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Indian Culture, Salient Aspects of Art Forms, Literature, and Architecture from Ancient to Modern Times, Ancient Indian Geography, and Archaeological Discoveries.
- **GS Paper I:** Accounts of Foreign Travelers (Xuanzang) and Iron Age Cultural Complex (Painted Grey Ware).

7. Resumption of Trilateral Talks on Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Agreement on Trilateral Peace Talks:** Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to resume US-mediated three-way peace negotiations with Ukraine, expected at a technical level in Abu Dhabi.
- **Goodwill Gesture by Russia:** Prior to the meeting with US envoy Steve Witkoff, Russia released Stephen Hubbard, a 74-year-old retired US teacher detained since 2022.
- **Focus on Security Guarantees:** Proposed technical negotiations will primarily focus on defining post-war security guarantees for both Ukraine and Russia once hostilities end.
- **Diplomatic Leverage on Regional Issues:** Russia offered to leverage its long-standing relations with Iran to assist the US in addressing concerns over Tehran's nuclear program.
- **Proposal for Economic Supply:** Russian leadership offered to supply substantial quantities of agricultural fertilizer to the US to support domestic farmers.
- **Potential Leaders' Summit:** Discussions included planning a potential historical meeting between Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

Essential Definitions

- **Trilateral Diplomacy:** Formal negotiations involving three distinct sovereign parties or actors to resolve geopolitical disputes or establish international agreements.
- **Goodwill Gesture:** Unilateral, non-binding concession made by one nation during diplomatic negotiations to build mutual trust and facilitate constructive dialogue.
- **Security Guarantees:** Explicit diplomatic, legal, or military commitments provided by sovereign states or international bodies to ensure a nation's territorial integrity and sovereignty.
- **Consular Access:** The legal right under international law for diplomatic representatives of a country to visit, communicate with, and assist their nationals detained in a foreign state.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51 of the UN Charter:** Recognizes the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations.
- **Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961):** Establishes the framework for diplomatic ties, immunity, and peaceful resolution of international conflicts through diplomatic missions.
- **Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (1963):** Regulates consular operations and mandates prompt notification and access regarding detained foreign nationals.
- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Directs the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.

Conclusion

The proposed trilateral talks signal a potential shift toward diplomatic engagement in resolving the European conflict. However, establishing lasting peace will depend on balancing mutual security guarantees with respect for international legal norms and territorial sovereignty.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** International Relations, Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings and Agreements Involving or Affecting India's Interests.
- **GS Paper II:** Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's Interests, Role of International Institutions in Conflict Resolution.

8. Strategic Vulnerabilities at Gulf Chokepoints: The Saudi Dilemma

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Simultaneous Chokepoint Crisis:** Saudi Arabia faces an unprecedented dual-chokepoint crisis, encountering simultaneous maritime disruptions at the Bab al-Mandeb Strait and the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Escalation in Yemen:** The multi-decade Saudi-Houthi friction intensified following Houthi advances along Red Sea coastal plains, triggering renewed Saudi coalition airstrikes and retaliatory Houthi missile and drone strikes on key targets, including Riyadh airport and Aramco assets.
- **Complexity of Houthi Dynamics:** While maintaining strong ties with Tehran, the Houthi movement retains distinct Arab political objectives; their operational control over Bab al-Mandeb poses a major threat to global shipping lanes.
- **Severe Energy Market Impacts:** Contrary to claims of normalized energy flows, global oil prices have spiked significantly, exacerbated by Iranian restrictions in the Strait of Hormuz and disruptions along regional pipelines.
- **Strategic Dilemma for Riyadh:** Despite holding an $83 billion defense budget, Saudi Arabia lacks the ground capability to defeat Houthi forces, leaving diplomatic de-escalation and mutual blockade lifting as the primary viable path forward.



- **Critical Stakes for India:** The crisis directly affects India's economic and human security, threatening energy supplies, driving up fertilizer costs, and risking the safety of over nine million Indian expatriates residing in the Gulf region.

Essential Definitions

- **Chokepoint:** A narrow, strategic geographic waterway connecting larger bodies of water, where maritime traffic can be easily restricted or blocked during geopolitical conflicts.
- **Bab al-Mandeb Strait:** A vital maritime passage linking the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean, facilitating roughly 12% of global sea-borne trade.
- **Strait of Hormuz:** A crucial sea route connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman, handling over 20% of the world's petroleum supply.
- **Asymmetric Warfare:** Military operations where a smaller, non-state actor utilizes unconventional tactics, such as low-cost drones and anti-ship missiles, to counter a conventionally superior military power.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982:** Establishes international legal rules governing freedom of navigation and the right of transit passage through international straits used for navigation.
- **Article 51 of the UN Charter:** Guarantees sovereign states the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense against armed attacks.
- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to promote international peace, maintain honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **International Maritime Security Architecture:** Global legal and enforcement frameworks aimed at countering piracy, armed robbery, and maritime terrorism in high-risk commercial sea lines of communication.

Conclusion

The convergence of conflicts across Bab al-Mandeb and Hormuz highlights the limits of military action in resolving entrenched regional rivalries. Restoring maritime security requires sustained diplomatic dialogue, structured block-lifting agreements, and multi-lateral peace arrangements.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** International Relations, Regional Conflicts, Effect of Policies of Foreign Countries on India's Interests, Indian Diaspora in West Asia.
- **GS Paper III:** Energy Security, Strategic Maritime Infrastructure, Impact of Global Supply Chain Disruptions on National Economy.

9. Nobel Peace Prize 2026: The Struggle for International Law Against Authoritarianism

Key Highlights & Summary

- **2026 Nobel Peace Prize Announcement:** South African jurist Navanethem "Navi" Pillay has been awarded the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize, signaling a firm reaffirmation of international law amidst escalating global conflicts.
- **Erosion of International Legal Norms:** Authoritarian leadership and major global powers have precipitated a sharp decline in adherence to international human rights, replacing codified international law with vague "rules-based" assertions.
- **Emergence of Authoritarian International Law:** Powerful state actors are actively retooling international law away from human rights toward regime survival, weak intergovernmental bodies, and transactional state diplomacy.
- **Instrumentalization of Sovereignty:** National sovereignty is increasingly invoked by authoritarian states as a legal shield to resist external scrutiny and delegitimize findings from UN human rights bodies.
- **Resistance to Adjudication:** Authoritarian legal systems demonstrate growing resistance toward independent international courts, preferring non-binding bilateral negotiations over judicial enforcement.

- **Imperative for Institutional Defense:** Safeguarding an equitable legal framework requires active resistance from civil society, academic institutions, and independent global courts against the dilution of international law.

Essential Definitions

- **Authoritarian International Law:** A conceptual framework where state actors adapt and repurpose international legal instruments to consolidate regime security, limit multilateral accountability, and restrict human rights enforcement.
- **Rules-Based International Order:** A flexible, political framework of global governance distinct from formal, legally binding international law, often criticized for selective application by major powers.
- **Judicialisation:** The structural trend of delegating dispute settlement authority to independent international courts and tribunals.
- **Sovereignty (as a Legal Shield):** The doctrine of non-interference in domestic affairs utilized by states to deflect scrutiny regarding human rights compliance and war crimes.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Directs the State to promote international peace, foster respect for international law and treaty obligations, and encourage settlement of disputes by arbitration.
- **Article 2(4) of the UN Charter:** Prohibits the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state.
- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 1948:** Provides the foundational normative standards for international human rights protection across member states.
- **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998):** Establishes the permanent legal tribunal prosecuting genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, currently facing political resistance from non-signatory global powers.

Conclusion

The recognition of Navi Pillay highlights the struggle between democratic accountability and authoritarian redefinition in international relations. Preserving a rule-based global order rooted in human dignity requires international institutions to uphold enforcement mechanisms against unilateral state power.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** International Relations, Role of International Courts and Tribunals, Important International Institutions, Effect of Foreign Policies on Global Governance.
- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution (Directive Principles - Article 51) and India's Foreign Policy Obligations.

10. Geopolitical Risks of Foreign Technology Dependence on India's Infrastructure

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Risks of Unilateral Service Restraints:** Recent reports of SpaceX throttling its Starshield network in Ukraine underscore the strategic risks of relying on foreign corporate actors for critical infrastructure.

- **Satellite Communications Regulatory Hurdles:** Foreign satellite broadband providers, including Starlink and Eutelsat OneWeb, face security clearance requirements in India, highlighting the tension between rapid tech adoption and national sovereignty.
- **NavIC Operational Bottlenecks:** India's sovereign satellite navigation system, NavIC, faces operational gaps with only three fully functional satellites, leaving the nation reliant on US-controlled GPS for positional timing.
- **Vulnerabilities in Sovereign Cloud Infrastructure:** While project MeghRaj 2.0 keeps domestic data localized, foreign dependencies remain through cloud management control systems like AWS Outposts.



- **Financial Network Insulation:** India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) provides robust domestic payment autonomy, yet foreign cross-border banking ties leave the wider financial ecosystem exposed to external sanctions.
- **Defense Supply Chain Dependencies:** Essential defense platforms like the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas remain vulnerable to foreign supply delays and potential unilateral geopolitical restrictions.

Essential Definitions

- **Positioning, Navigation, and Timing (PNT):** Satellite-derived spatial and temporal data essential for defense operations, critical civilian transport, and telecommunications.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** The capacity of a sovereign nation to pursue independent foreign policy and national security objectives without coercive external interference.
- **MeghRaj:** The Government of India's cloud initiative managed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) to optimize ICT spending and accelerate e-governance service delivery.
- **SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication):** A global messaging network used by financial institutions to securely transmit information and instructions for international transfers.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

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- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Directs the State to promote international peace and security and maintain honorable relations between nations.
- **Indian Space Policy 2023:** Regulates private sector participation, satellite communication licensing, and orbital asset deployment to ensure space security and national sovereignty.
- **Telecommunications Act, 2023:** Authorizes the Central Government to take control or suspend telecommunication services during public emergencies or in the interest of national security.
- **Information Technology Act, 2000:** Section 69A empowers authorities to block public access or intercept data to protect sovereign integrity and critical information infrastructure.

Conclusion

Over-reliance on foreign technology vendors creates structural vulnerabilities across national defense, telecommunications, and finance. Safeguarding India's strategic autonomy demands accelerated

indigenization of NavIC, adoption of open-source operating systems, and building sovereign cloud management networks.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Government Policies and Interventions for Development, Issues Arising out of Design and Implementation, Effect of Policies of Developed Nations on India's Interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Science & Technology (Space, Cloud Computing, Cybersecurity), Indigenization of Technology, Internal Security, and Critical Infrastructure Protection.

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