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VIDHVATH IAS KAS ACADEMY & STUDY CENTRE

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

DATE: 29/10/2026 (THURSDAY)



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1. How El Niño Shaped Path and Intensity of Cyclone Arnab

Key Highlights & Summary

- Cyclone Arnab formed as the first cyclone of 2026 in the North Indian Ocean basin, originating from a lowpressure system in the southeast Bay of Bengal on October 23 and intensifying rapidly.
- Under the developing El Niño scenario, warmer ocean waters with sea surface temperatures in the Niño3.4 region recording 2to2.8 degrees Celsius above normal fueled the rapid intensification of the storm into a very severe cyclonic storm.
- While Odisha and West Bengal are typically more prone to Bay of Bengal cyclones, El Niño years alter wind patterns and air pressure, causing cyclones to affect the Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu coasts instead.
- The naming of tropical cyclones in the North Indian Ocean is managed by a panel of 13 member countries following strict guidelines, with the current name Arnab put forward by Bangladesh.
- Tropical cyclone intensity is governed by a complex process involving boundary layers, wind shear, convection, and upper ocean circulation interaction.
- Following landfall near Bapatla and Visakhapatnam with wind speeds equivalent to a very severe cyclone, Arnab brought heavy rainfall ranging from 64to115mm to parts of northern Andhra Pradesh and southern Odisha.

Essential Definitions

- **El Niño**: The abnormal warming of surface waters in the Pacific Ocean that suppresses monsoon rainfall, spikes temperatures, and alters global wind patterns.
- **Tropical Cyclone**: A rapidly rotating storm system characterized by a lowpressure center, strong winds, and heavy spiral rain squalls originating over tropical waters.
- **Landfall**: The event of a tropical storm moving over land after being over water, often causing maximum damage due to high winds and storm surges.

How El Niño fuelled Cyclone Arnab's rapid intensification



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **National Disaster Management Act, 2005**: Provides the statutory framework for disaster management in India, establishing the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) headed by the Prime Minister and State and District Disaster Management Authorities to formulate holistic mitigation and response plans for events like severe cyclones.
- **Constitutional Provisions**: Under the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, disaster management and relief fall under concurrent and state jurisdictions, empowering state and local administrative bodies to execute swift evacuations and relief operations during weather emergencies.

Conclusion

Cyclone Arnab underscores the profound influence of climatic anomalies like El Niño on shifting cyclone trajectories and intensifying storm behaviors in the North Indian Ocean basin. Effective forecasting by meteorological agencies coupled with proactive community evacuation and robust disaster management frameworks remain critical to minimizing loss of life and property along India's vulnerable coastline.

UPSC Relevance

This topic is highly relevant for the UPSC Civil Services Examination under General Studies Paper I (Climatology, Geography of India) and General Studies Paper III (Disaster Management, Environmental Impact Assessment, and Weather Forecasting Systems). Aspirants must understand ocean-atmosphere interactions, the mechanics of El Niño, and institutional disaster response frameworks.

2. Kochi Road Rage: When Parents are Liable for Minors

Key Highlights & Summary

- A recent road accident in Kochi involving a 17-year-old minor driver resulted in the death of a scooter rider, bringing Section 199A of the Motor Vehicles Act into sharp focus.
- Section 199A, inserted via the 2019 amendment, enforces vicarious liability by holding guardians or vehicle owners accountable if a minor commits a motor vehicle offense.
- The law prescribes up to three years of imprisonment, a fine of ₹25,000 for the guardian, and a one-year cancellation of the motor vehicle's registration.
- Procedural mandates require recording the minor's offense in the police general diary and submitting a Social Background Report (SBR) to the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) prior to prosecuting guardians.
- Past judicial scrutiny by the Kerala High Court highlights that several cases against owners failed due to police lapses in filing timely SBRs before the JJB.
- The Kochi case involves charges under Section 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for culpable homicide not amounting to murder, alongside Motor Vehicles Act violations.



Essential Definitions

- **Vicarious Responsibility**: A legal doctrine under which a person, such as a guardian or vehicle owner, is held legally accountable for the unlawful actions committed by another individual.
- **Social Background Report (SBR)**: A mandatory report prepared by child welfare officers to evaluate the socio-economic and psychological context of a juvenile brought before the JJB.
- **Heinous Offence**: Under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015, an offense for which the minimum punishment prescribed under Indian penal laws is imprisonment for seven years or more.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Section 199A, Motor Vehicles Act, 1988**: Enacted through the 2019 Amendment Act to impose liability on vehicle owners or guardians when a minor drives without a license [Section 181(3)], violates age norms [Section 181(4)], or engages in dangerous driving [Section 184].
- **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**: Governs the classification of offenses into petty, serious, and heinous categories, establishing procedures for trying juveniles in conflict with the law.

- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**: Replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC), featuring Section 105 for culpable homicide not amounting to murder.
- **Article 21 of the Constitution**: Ensures the right to life and personal liberty, upholding due process and protection against arbitrary state action during juvenile trials and legal procedures.

Conclusion

The application of statutory provisions like Section 199A serves as a critical deterrent against negligent parenting and unauthorized juvenile driving. However, adherence to strict procedural steps before the JJB remains essential to ensure that legal accountability is validly enforced while safeguarding juvenile rights.

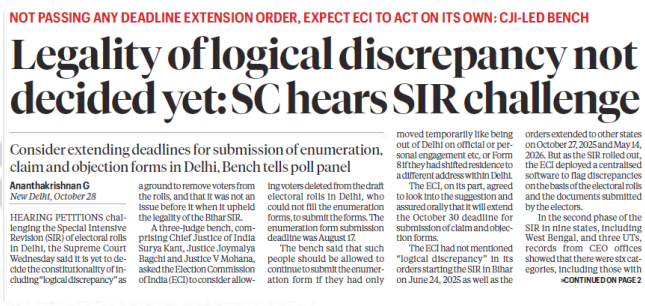
UPSC Relevance

This issue holds high significance under General Studies Paper II (Governance, Statutory Frameworks, Social Justice, and Judicial Precedents) and General Studies Paper IV (Ethics and Administrative Responsibility). Candidates should understand the legal balance between parental liability, procedural compliance in juvenile law, and road safety regulations.

3. Legality of Logical Discrepancy Not Decided: SC Hears SIR Challenge

Key Highlights & Summary

- A three-judge Supreme Court bench led by CJI heard petitions challenging the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Delhi, stating it is yet to decide the constitutionality of using "logical discrepancy" as a ground for voter removal.
- The apex court suggested that the Election Commission of India (ECI) consider extending deadlines for submitting enumeration, claim, and objection forms for deleted electors in Delhi.
- The ECI used centralized software to flag voter discrepancies across multiple criteria, including age gaps, sibling counts, or name spelling mismatches.
- Out of over 97.5 lakh electors in Delhi's draft roll, over 19.3 lakh notices were issued based on system-identified logical discrepancies.
- The court clarified that the Bihar SIR judgment does not serve as a binding precedent on the legality of "logical discrepancy," as the issue was not formally adjudicated in that matter.



NOT PASSING ANY DEADLINE EXTENSION ORDER, EXPECT ECI TO ACT ON ITS OWN: CJI-LED BENCH

Legality of logical discrepancy not decided yet: SC hears SIR challenge

Consider extending deadlines for submission of enumeration, claim and objection forms in Delhi, Bench tells poll panel

Ananthakrishnan G
New Delhi, October 28

HEARING PETITIONS challenging the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Delhi, the Supreme Court Wednesday said it is yet to decide the constitutionality of including "logical discrepancy" as a ground to remove voters from the rolls, and that it was not an issue before it when it upheld the legality of the Bihar SIR.

A three-judge bench, comprising Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, Justice Joymalya Bagchi and Justice V Mohana, asked the Election Commission of India (ECI) to consider allowing voters deleted from the draft electoral rolls in Delhi, who could not fill the enumeration forms, to submit the forms. The enumeration form submission deadline was August 17.

The bench said that such people should be allowed to continue to submit the enumeration form if they had only moved temporarily like being out of Delhi on official or personal engagement etc, or Form 8 if they had shifted residence to a different address within Delhi.

The ECI, on its part, agreed to look into the suggestion and assured orally that it will extend the October 30 deadline for submission of claim and objection forms.

The ECI had not mentioned "logical discrepancy" in its orders starting the SIR in Bihar on June 24, 2025 as well as the orders extended to other states on October 27, 2025 and May 14, 2026. But as the SIR rolled out, the ECI deployed a centralised software to flag discrepancies on the basis of the electoral rolls and the documents submitted by the electors.

In the second phase of the SIR in nine states, including West Bengal, and three UTs, records from CEO offices showed that there were six categories, including those with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

- The bench urged the ECI to facilitate voter registration via Form 6 and Form 8 without imposing rigid historical cut-offs on Delhi's floating population.

Essential Definitions

- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)**: A comprehensive, door-to-door physical and digital verification drive conducted by the ECI to update, verify, and clean electoral rolls.
- **Logical Discrepancy**: Software-generated flags identifying potential voter roll errors based on algorithmic anomalies like impossible age gaps between parent and child or duplicate entries.
- **Form 6 & Form 8**: Statutory electoral forms used respectively for new voter registration and for shifting residence, correction of entries, or updating particulars in existing rolls.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 324 of the Constitution**: Vests the superintendence, direction, and control of the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of elections in the Election Commission of India.
- **Article 326 of the Constitution**: Guarantees adult suffrage, establishing that every citizen aged 18 or above is entitled to be registered as a voter, subject to disqualifications under law.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1950 (RPA)**: Sections 21 and 22 govern the revision, inclusion, and deletion of names in electoral rolls, laying down due process requirements before striking out voters.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's scrutiny emphasizes that while technological tools can assist in cleaning electoral rolls, procedural safeguards and administrative fairness must be maintained. Arbitrary voter deletions under the guise of algorithmic discrepancies without proper human verification or adequate opportunity for response undermine the fundamental right to vote.

UPSC Relevance

This topic is highly relevant for General Studies Paper II under Indian Constitution (Electoral Reforms, Constitutional Bodies like ECI, Judicial Review, and Protection of Democratic Rights). Aspirants should understand the balance between administrative technology in governance, statutory voter rights, and judicial oversight of electoral processes.

4. Jaishankar Headed to Atlanta for G20 Ministers' Meet; CHOGM Next Stop

Key Highlights & Summary

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar is visiting Atlanta in the United States to attend the G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting scheduled for October 30–31.
- Alongside the G20 summit, top diplomats from India, Australia, Japan, and the United States will convene in Atlanta for the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting.
- Following the US visit, the External Affairs Minister will travel to Antigua & Barbuda to participate in the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) from November 1 to 4.
- High-level diplomatic engagements focus on bilateral Indo-US ties, address trade negotiations affected by tariffs, and strengthen mutual defense and energy cooperation targets.



- Discussions at the G20 ministerial forum will address pressing global challenges, including global energy security issues resulting from ongoing regional conflicts like the US-Iran tension.
- The official visits also serve to lay the groundwork for upcoming bilateral high-level leader summits and reinforce India's commitment to strategic multilateral partnerships.

Essential Definitions

- **G20 (Group of Twenty)**: An premier intergovernmental forum comprising major advanced and emerging economies, focusing on global economic stability, climate mitigation, and sustainable development.

- **Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue)**: A diplomatic and strategic security partnership between India, the United States, Japan, and Australia aimed at ensuring a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.
- **CHOGM (Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting)**: A biennial summit bringing together leaders of Commonwealth member states to deliberate on shared political, economic, and social priorities.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51 of the Constitution**: Under Directive Principles of State Policy, Article 51 instructs the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **Allocation of Business Rules, 1961**: Formally empowers the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) to execute foreign policy initiatives, sign international agreements, and represent the Republic of India at multilateral institutions like the G20 and Commonwealth.

Conclusion

India's multi-aligned foreign policy approach, reflected through active participation in platforms like G20, Quad, and CHOGM, demonstrates its commitment to addressing global governance challenges, safeguarding national energy security, and shaping a balanced multipolar world order.

UPSC Relevance

This news holds strategic significance under General Studies Paper II (International Relations, Bilateral Relations, Groupings and Agreements involving India or affecting India's Interests, and Important International Institutions). Candidates should focus on the geopolitical importance of the Quad, India's role in multilateral economic diplomacy, and foreign policy mechanisms under the Indian Constitution.

5. Inter-State Council is a Meeting Point That Has Withered Away. It Must Be Rebuilt

Key Highlights & Summary

- Established in 1990 based on the Sarkaria Commission recommendations, the Inter-State Council was conceived as a vital constitutional mechanism to foster cooperative federalism.
- Despite its constitutional mandate under Article 263, the Council has suffered from institutional atrophy, systemic neglect, irregular meetings, and reduced operational autonomy.
- The subordination of the Inter-State Council as an extension of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs has curtailed its authority, transforming it into a minor department rather than an independent administrative forum.
- Critical national policies, fiscal relations, and controversial issues like delimitation require structured inter-governmental deliberation rather than central unilateral decision-making.
- Rebuilding the Council with an independent secretariat, diverse civil servants, and technical experts will institutionalize dialogue and bridge structural gaps between Centre and states.
- Revitalizing the Inter-State Council as a permanent, autonomous body is essential to operationalize genuine cooperative federalism in India's diverse polity.

Essential Definitions

- **Cooperative Federalism**: A concept of federalism where the Centre and States interact decorously and cooperatively to solve common problems and negotiate policy outcomes.
- **Institutional Atrophy**: The gradual decline, weakening, or loss of functional effectiveness of an established institution due to persistent disuse, political neglect, or administrative subordination.
- **Delimitation**: The process of redrawing boundaries of Parliamentary or Assembly constituencies to reflect population changes based on census data.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 263 of the Constitution**: Empowers the President to establish an Inter-State Council to inquire into and advise upon disputes between states, investigate common interest topics, and make recommendations for better policy coordination.
- **Sarkaria Commission (1983)**: Recommended the establishment of a permanent Inter-State Council under Article 263, leading to its formal creation via Presidential Order in 1990.
- **Punchhi Commission (2007)**: Emphasized strengthening the Inter-State Council by ensuring mandatory regular meetings and granting it a broader mandate over Centre-State relations.

Conclusion

The Inter-State Council remains an underutilized constitutional instrument that holds immense potential for resolving federal disputes and aligning national priorities. Reconstituting it into a genuinely autonomous, vibrant mechanism will transform political friction into cooperative partnership, ensuring that policy formulation in a pluralist democracy remains consultative and balanced.

UPSC Relevance

This topic is highly significant for General Studies Paper II under Indian Constitution (Functions and Responsibilities of the Union and the States, Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers, and Institutional Mechanisms like Article 263). Candidates should understand the dynamics of Centre-State relations, constitutional provisions for inter-state coordination, and structural reforms required for cooperative federalism.

6. In France, Protests Frame Costs of State Silence

Key Highlights & Summary

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- A month-old high school protest movement in suburban Paris, initially centered on educational reform and infrastructural demands, spiraled into civil unrest following initial state indifference and harsh police repression.
- The protests originated over demands to repair school buildings, address teacher shortages, resolve overcrowded classrooms, and abrogate Parcoursup, a controversial early sorting selection system.
- As student demonstrations intensified, trade unions and "yellow jackets" joined, culminating in an estimated 800,000 people taking to the streets across France over cost-of-living concerns.
- Tensions escalated into a heinous hate crime when a gunman attacked minority youth in Trappes and La Verrière, leaving one dead and multiple injured, an event President Macron termed a turning point.

- Mainstream media amplification of far-right political rhetoric and state silence exacerbated ethno-racial polarization and public frustration across suburban communities.
- The crisis resulted in severe economic losses, heritage property damage, mass arrests, and social division before the government ultimately conceded to student demands.

Essential Definitions

- **Parcoursup**: An automated web platform used by France to match high school students with undergraduate university courses, criticized for introducing early selective sorting.
- **Yellow Jackets (Gilets Jaunes)**: A populist, grassroots political movement in France advocating for economic justice, lower fuel taxes, and systemic institutional reforms.
- **State Silence**: A situation where political leadership fails to respond promptly or constructively to public grievances, leading to loss of institutional trust and potential social agitation.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789)**: Guarantees fundamental rights to peaceful assembly, freedom of speech, and equal access to public education, forming the constitutional bedrock of the French Republic.
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Article 21**: Protects the right to peaceful assembly globally, stipulating that restrictions must be lawful, necessary, and proportionate in a democratic society.
- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 26**: Establishes the right to education and dictates that higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit without systemic discrimination.

Conclusion

The unrest in France underscores the hazards of state indifference and police overreach when addressing legitimate socio-economic grievances. Timely dialogue, inclusive educational reforms, and proactive counter-measures against hate speech remain critical to maintaining social cohesion and protecting democratic values.

UPSC Relevance

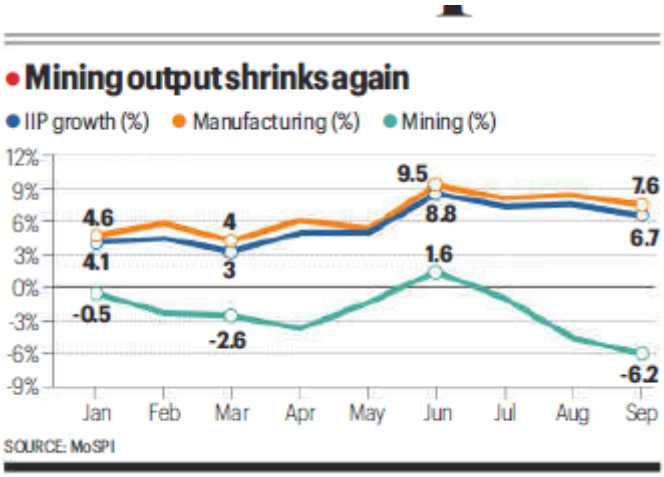
This topic is highly relevant for General Studies Paper II (Comparative Governance, Civil Society Movements, Social Justice, and Human Rights) and General Studies Paper IV (Ethics, Public Administration, and Conflict Resolution). Candidates should examine the dynamics of public protests, state responsiveness, ethical responsibilities of media, and police handling of civil agitation.

7. Industrial Growth Slowed to 4-Month Low of 6.7% in Sept

Key Highlights & Summary

- India's industrial growth, measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), slowed to a four-month low of 6.7% in September, primarily due to severe contraction in the mining sector.
- The mining and quarrying sector output shrank by 6.2% year-on-year, marking its biggest decline in three years, largely driven by disruptions caused by monsoon rains.
- Manufacturing sector growth, which carries the highest weightage in IIP at 76%, moderated to a four-month low of 7.6%, with only 10 out of 23 sub-sectors performing better than in August.

- Electricity generation from non-renewable sources expanded by 16.5%, the fastest pace in 30 months, while renewable electricity growth slowed down to 4.3% in September.
- Industrial output growth averaged 6.8% in the first half of the financial year, outperforming the 4.4% growth recorded during the corresponding period of the previous year.
- Key high-frequency indicators like GST collections, automobile sales, and e-way bill generation reflected underlying domestic economic resilience despite global headwinds.



Essential Definitions

- **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)**: A key macroeconomic indicator compiled monthly by NSO that measures the short-term changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products.
- **Base Effect**: The distortion in a percentage-based annual growth rate caused by an abnormally high or low level of economic activity in the corresponding period of the previous year.
- **Use-Based Classification**: A categorization of industrial output under IIP into six distinct groups: Primary Goods, Capital Goods, Intermediate Goods, Infrastructure/Construction Goods, Consumer Durables, and Consumer Non-Durables.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Collection of Statistics Act, 2008**: Provides the legal backbone for collecting industrial and economic data across India, enabling the central government to mandate reliable data submissions for national indices like IIP.
- **National Statistical Office (NSO) Mandate**: Operates under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) to regularly compile, analyze, and publish official industrial statistics to guide macroeconomic planning and policy formulation.
- **Constitutional Allocation**: Economic planning and statistics fall under the Concurrent List (List III, Entry 20) of the Seventh Schedule, enabling central and state collaboration in industrial reporting.

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Conclusion

The temporary moderation in IIP growth reflects seasonal disruptions and unfavourable base effects rather than a structural economic decline. Sustained growth in key sub-sectors like manufacturing, combined with resilient high-frequency economic indicators, signals that India's broader industrial momentum remains intact.

UPSC Relevance

This topic is highly relevant for General Studies Paper III under Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development, and Industrial Performance. Aspirants should understand IIP components, sectoral weightages, the role of core industries, and how macroeconomic indicators inform central bank monetary policy and fiscal planning.

8. 'Bizarre' for World to Incur More Debt to Deal with High Debt, Says NK Singh

Key Highlights & Summary

- Former 15th Finance Commission Chairman N.K. Singh highlighted that taking on additional debt as a solution to high global debt levels is a bizarre economic prescription during a book launch event in New Delhi.
- The global economy is undergoing a severe multi-dimensional crisis, with advancing economies continually taking on higher debt loads due to political resistance against fiscal consolidation.
- Prominent economist Minouche Shafik noted that advanced nations face political gridlock preventing structural fiscal adjustments, while financial markets impose stricter disciplines on developing economies.
- Japan was cited as an extreme case of elevated public debt levels, with warnings that ballooning debt-to-GDP ratios in nations like France signal impending fiscal and political vulnerabilities.
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar discussed India's macroeconomic trajectory, emphasizing how post-1991 economic reforms transformed the nation's political economy alongside its growth model.
- Panelists stressed that entrenched vested interests in advanced economies may resist fiscal prudence until forced into systemic transformation by an impending global crisis.

Essential Definitions

- **Fiscal Consolidation**: A policy aimed at reducing government deficits and accumulation of debt to maintain long-term macroeconomic stability.
- **Debt-to-GDP Ratio**: A financial metric that compares a country's public debt to its gross domestic product, indicating its capacity to pay back its debts.
- **Political Economy**: The branch of social science that analyzes how political institutions, economic environment, and capitalism influence each other.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 292 of the Constitution**: Empowers the Union Government to borrow upon the security of the Consolidated Fund of India within limits set by Parliament by law.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003**: Sets statutory targets for the Indian Government to limit fiscal deficit, ensure debt sustainability, and maintain fiscal discipline across financial years.
- **Article 280 of the Constitution**: Mandates the constitution of Finance Commissions to recommend revenue distribution between Union and States, keeping fiscal sustainability in mind.

Conclusion

Uncontrolled public borrowing in major world economies poses significant risks to global financial stability. Adopting prudent fiscal frameworks, managing public debt responsibly, and executing structural reforms remain vital for ensuring sustainable economic growth without overburdening future generations.

UPSC Relevance

This issue holds strategic relevance for General Studies Paper III under Indian Economy (Fiscal Policy, Public Debt Management, FRBM Act, and Global Economic Trends) and General Studies Paper II (Role of

Constitutional Bodies like Finance Commission). Candidates should analyze the implications of rising global debt on developing markets and the balance between growth and fiscal discipline.

9. Legality and Implications of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of Electoral Rolls

Key Highlights & Summary

- The Supreme Court's May 27, 2026 verdict endorsed the Election Commission of India's (ECI) decision to conduct a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, starting with Bihar in June 2025.
- The controversial SIR exercise effectively called into question all previous electoral rolls used in elections across Bihar between 2003 and 2025, leading to widespread voter deletions and public dissatisfaction.
- Critics argue that by allowing the ECI to conduct a limited inquiry into citizenship, the apex court has granted unguided discretion that risks disenfranchising existing, legitimate voters on mere suspicion.
- The lack of clear, conclusive statutory guidelines or definitive documentation defining proof of Indian citizenship leaves voters vulnerable to arbitrary exclusion without adequate pre-decisional hearings.
- Article 326 of the Constitution strictly limits voter qualifications to adulthood and citizenship, with disqualifications restricted to non-residence, unsoundness of mind, crime, or corrupt practices.
- Free and fair elections are an inviolable part of the basic structure of the Indian Constitution, making the protection of the right to vote paramount for representative democracy.

Essential Definitions

- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)**: A comprehensive administrative exercise by the ECI that undertakes door-to-door verification and re-enumeration, effectively superseding previous electoral rolls.
- **Disenfranchisement**: The revocation or deprivation of the right of suffrage (the right to vote) of a citizen who was previously recognized as a qualified voter.
- **Basic Structure Doctrine**: A judicial principle established by the Supreme Court stating that Parliament cannot amend certain fundamental features of the Constitution, including democracy and free and fair elections.

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Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 326 of the Constitution**: Mandates elections to the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies on the basis of adult suffrage, specifying citizenship, age, and non-disqualification criteria.
- **Article 324 of the Constitution**: Vests the superintendence, direction, and control of the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of elections in the ECI.
- **Representation of the People Act, 1950 and Registration of Electors Rules, 1960**: Statutory frameworks governing the preparation, revision, and updating of electoral rolls, which must strictly align with constitutional mandates.

- **Constitutional Articles 32, 141, 142, and 144**: Empower the Supreme Court to issue writs, declare binding law, and pass complete justice orders to protect fundamental rights and constitutional integrity.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's validation of the ECI's inquiry powers during the SIR process raises profound constitutional questions regarding citizenship verification and voter security. Without a definitive benchmark or conclusive documentation for proving citizenship, the integrity of the electoral process and the fundamental right to vote remain vulnerable to arbitrary administrative disruption.

UPSC Relevance

This issue is highly critical for General Studies Paper II under Indian Constitution, Separation of Powers, Statutory Bodies (ECI), Judicial Review, and Electoral Reforms. Aspirants must critically analyze the balance between administrative measures for electoral purity and the protection of democratic franchise rights under the basic structure doctrine.

10. India-New Zealand Trade Ties Set to Scale New Heights

Key Highlights & Summary

- The entry into force of the India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA) marks a historic milestone in bilateral relations, building upon historical ties like Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay's Mount Everest ascent.
- Current bilateral merchandise trade stands at $1.2 billion, with India fulfilling just 1.9% of New Zealand's $47.5 billion import market, highlighting massive untapped trade expansion potential.
- The FTA grants Indian exporters duty-free access across all tariff lines, offering immense growth opportunities for labor-intensive sectors like apparel, leather, footwear, and home textiles by eliminating average tariffs of nearly 10%.



- In higher-value manufacturing, the agreement opens doors for Indian engineering and automotive manufacturers to capture a larger share of New Zealand's multi-billion-dollar machinery and vehicle imports.
- The pact covers 118 services sectors, provides a dedicated quota of 5,000 visas for skilled professionals, and facilitates enhanced student mobility and post-study work opportunities.
- New Zealand has committed to facilitating $20 billion in foreign direct investment into India over a 15-year period across renewable energy, agritech, infrastructure, and high-value manufacturing.

Essential Definitions

- **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)**: A treaty between two or more countries designed to reduce or eliminate import and export tariffs, quotas, and regulatory barriers to foster closer economic integration.

- **Tariff Line**: A specific code or classification in a customs tariff schedule representing a distinct product category subject to specific import duties.
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)**: An investment made by a firm or individual in one country into business interests located in another country, establishing a long-term economic interest.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51 of the Constitution**: Enshrined under the Directive Principles of State Policy, it directs the state to promote international peace and security and foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **Allocation of Business Rules, 1961**: Empowers the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to negotiate, conclude, and implement international trade agreements and bilateral commercial pacts on behalf of India.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992**: Provides the primary legal framework for regulating foreign trade, import-export licensing, and executing international trade policies in India.

Conclusion

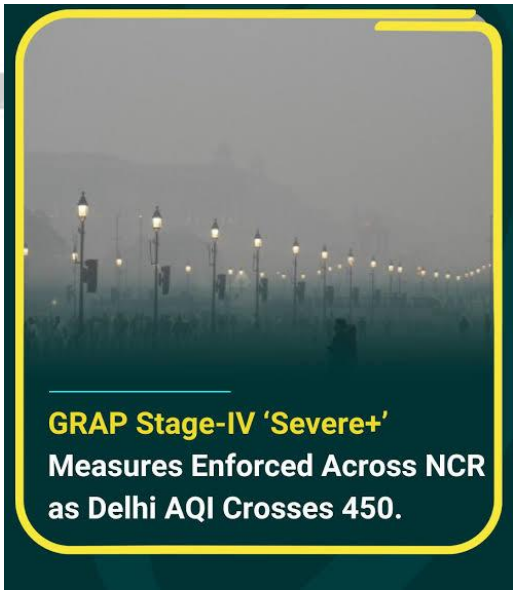
The India-New Zealand FTA establishes a robust economic architecture designed to elevate bilateral commerce, investment, and professional mobility to unprecedented levels. Effective utilization of these provisions by businesses and stakeholders will be the key to doubling bilateral trade by 2030 and cementing India's strategic footprint in the Indo-Pacific region.

UPSC Relevance

This topic is highly relevant for General Studies Paper II (International Relations, Bilateral Groupings, and Trade Agreements affecting India's interests) and General Studies Paper III (Indian Economy, Growth, Export Promotion, and Foreign Investment). Aspirants should understand the economic rationale of modern FTAs, trade complementarity, and India's trade diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific.

11. CAQM Invokes GRAP Stage I in Delhi-NCR as Winter Air Quality Worsens

Key Highlights & Summary



- The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) invoked Stage 1 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in Delhi-NCR following a drop in air quality to the 'poor' category.
- Winter air pollution spikes across the Indo-Gangetic Plains due to meteorological factors like lower wind speeds and temperature drops, aggravated by stubble burning, festive firecrackers, and vehicular emissions.
- GRAP is categorized into four stages based on Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI): Stage I ('Poor', 201–300), Stage II ('Very Poor', 301–400), Stage III ('Severe', 401–450), and Stage IV ('Severe+', >450).
- Critical restrictions under Stage III and IV include bans on construction/demolition activities, entry of non-essential trucks, and plying of BS III petrol and BS IV diesel light motor vehicles.

- An analysis by the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) highlights that GRAP lacks long-term structural efficacy, with Delhi's mean winter AQI fluctuating from 280 in 2022–23 to 295 in 2025–26 without consistent improvement.
- The Delhi government introduced standalone winter restrictions from November 1, including doubling parking fees and banning non-Delhi BS-VI non-compliant vehicles, with GRAP orders retaining legal precedence in case of conflicts.

Essential Definitions

- **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)**: An emergency mechanism providing staged, short-term measures to mitigate spikes in air pollution across Delhi and adjoining National Capital Region districts.
- **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)**: A statutory body established to improve air quality management, streamline inter-state coordination, and enforce pollution mitigation measures in NCR and adjoining areas.
- **Air Quality Index (AQI)**: A standardized tool used by environmental monitoring authorities to measure daily ambient air quality levels and communicate health impacts to the public.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021**: Provides statutory powers to CAQM, replacing the non-statutory Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) to issue legally binding directives across state boundaries.
- **Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981**: Offers the overarching legal framework for preventing, controlling, and abating air pollution through central and state pollution control boards.
- **Article 21 of the Constitution**: Encompasses the fundamental right to clean air and a healthy environment as an integral part of the Right to Life, continuously affirmed by Supreme Court jurisprudence.

Conclusion

While GRAP serves as a crucial short-term emergency protocol to suppress seasonal pollution peaks, its inability to deliver persistent air quality improvements highlights the need for year-round, airshed-based emission reduction strategies. Transitioning from reactive seasonal curbs to proactive structural reforms across industrial, transportation, and agricultural sectors is vital for achieving sustainable environmental outcomes.

UPSC Relevance

This topic holds substantial significance under General Studies Paper III (Environmental Pollution, Degradation, Impact Assessment, and Statutory Bodies like CAQM) and General Studies Paper II (Governance, Fundamental Rights under Article 21, and Inter-State Coordination). Candidates should analyze the difference between emergency response mechanisms and regional airshed management strategy.

12. How Neoliberalism Turned the World Against Its Young

Key Highlights & Summary

- Global youth unrest, witnessed across countries like France, Albania, Spain, and India, is fundamentally driven by the structural failures of the neoliberal economic model, which prioritizes profits over public welfare.

- Youth unemployment rates in G7 countries are nearly double the overall unemployment figures, reflecting a systemic lack of labor demand rather than an excess supply of labor.
- The neoliberal counter-revolution led by figures like Milton Friedman dismantled the welfare state, rolled back the gains of the Golden Age of Capitalism, and restored class balance in favor of capitalists through union-busting and flexible labor markets.
- Falling wage shares under neoliberalism trigger a crisis of underconsumption, where reduced consumer spending dampens aggregate demand and discourages business investment.
- The rapid commercialization and soaring costs of education under neoliberalism leave young graduates burdened with debt while failing to guarantee remunerative employment.
- Emerging technologies like Artificial Intelligence further aggravate this vulnerability by threatening to accelerate labor-displacement and shrink job opportunities for the younger generation.

Essential Definitions

- **Neoliberalism**: An economic and political ideology advocating for free markets, deregulation, privatization, and significant reductions in government spending on public welfare.
- **Involuntary Unemployment**: A condition where individuals are willing to work at the prevailing market wage rate but are unable to find employment due to insufficient aggregate labor demand.
- **Underconsumption Crisis**: An economic condition characterized by systemic overproduction relative to consumer purchasing power, driven by suppressed wages and unequal income distribution.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)**: Under Part IV of the Constitution, provisions like Article 38 and Article 39 direct the State to minimize inequalities in income, ensure adequate means of livelihood, and protect workers from exploitation.
- **Right to Equality (Article 14)**: Guarantees equality before the law and equal protection of the laws, serving as a constitutional touchstone against systemic socioeconomic marginalization and inequitable economic policies.
- **Right to Education (Article 21A)**: Mandates free and compulsory education for children, reflecting the constitutional imperative to make quality education accessible rather than subject to unchecked commercialization.

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Conclusion

The widespread disenchantment of youth across the globe is a natural outcome of an economic order that constrains wage growth, dismantles social safety nets, and inflates the cost of basic human development. Addressing this structural crisis requires shifting away from unbridled neoliberal orthodoxies toward inclusive macroeconomic policies that center employment generation and equitable wealth distribution.

UPSC Relevance

This topic is highly relevant for General Studies Paper III (Indian Economy, Inclusive Growth, Unemployment, and Mobilization of Resources) and General Studies Paper IV (Ethics and Human Actions in Socioeconomic Governance). Aspirants must critically analyze the socio-economic impacts of economic liberalisation, structural unemployment, and the policy imperatives required to harness demographic dividends sustainably.