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FINDER
FORTUNE IAS NEWS DAILY EXPLAINER

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THE HINDU

Is right-wing populism set to retreat?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Why in Focus?

- The **Republicans' major defeat in the U.S. midterm elections** may indicate a **decline in right-wing populism**.

Populism: A political approach that claims to fight for ordinary people against powerful leaders and elites and often promises to solve people's problems by giving priority to their demands.

- **Recent electoral losses of right-wing populists in countries like Brazil, Hungary, and Serbia** highlight a possible shift in political dynamics.

Key Highlights:

- The **2008 global financial crisis**, rising inequality and economic insecurity contributed to the **growth of populist movements** by increasing public dissatisfaction with established political parties.
- **Right-wing populism** often **blames immigrants, foreigners and globalist business elites for economic and social problems**, while promoting national identity and sovereignty.
- **Populist leaders, once in power**, may **concentrate executive authority and weaken democratic institutions** by influencing electoral systems and limiting institutional checks.
- **Donald Trump's rise in the 2010s** boosted global right-wing populism, influencing leaders such as **Jair Bolsonaro (Brazil), Nayib Bukele (El Salvador) and Viktor Orbán (Hungary)**.
- However, recent electoral setbacks for **Orbán, Aleksandar Vučić (Serbia) and Bolsonaro (Brazil)** indicate challenges to the movement, although it remains influential in **France, Germany and the U.K.**
- In **India**, public protests over **unemployment, examination irregularities and accountability** reflect growing dissatisfaction with governance and political institutions.
- **Protests** by the **Cockroach Janta Party** also led to the removal of the Education Minister.

Implications:

- Persistent **economic inequality** continues to fuel both left-wing and right-wing populism.
- The **weakening of the liberal centre can deepen political and social divisions**.
- **Blaming immigrants for economic problems**

can **increase hostility** towards foreigners and minorities.

- **Unresolved youth dissatisfaction** may shift political support towards either the Left or the Right.

Way Forward:

- Address **rising living costs, unemployment and inequality**, which fuel populist movements.
- **Address immigration and security concerns** through credible and evidence-based policies.
- Strengthen **institutional checks and balances** to prevent excessive concentration of executive power.
- **Encourage youth participation** through employment opportunities, accountability and democratic engagement.

Mains Question:

Examine the factors contributing to the persistence of right-wing populism globally, despite recent electoral setbacks, and discuss its implications for democratic governance. (250 Words, 15 marks)

Transparency is essential to institutional credibility

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2

Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Why in Focus?

- Proposed amendments to the **Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010** have sparked reactions from civil society organisations, Opposition parties, and Christian institutions.

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010: Enacted to regulate the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contributions by individuals & organisations in India. It is administered by the Ministry of Home Affairs to ensure that foreign funds are not used for activities detrimental to national interest.

- The **amendments aim to enhance regulation of foreign-funded organisations**, focusing on assets created or acquired through foreign contributions.

Key Highlights:

- The amendments propose a **Designated Authority to take provisional custody of foreign contributions and assets when an FCRA certificate is cancelled, surrendered or lapses**.
- If **registration is not renewed or restored within the prescribed period, assets may permanently vest in the authority for public purposes**, with proceeds credited to the Consolidated Fund of India.
- **Under the new framework, the renewals require** detailed disclosures of project-wise utilization, social media accounts, and ultimate foreign donors.
- Critics fear the amendments **may restrict legitimate civil society activity and disproportionately affect minority institutions**.
- The Bill has been referred to a **Joint Parliamentary Committee** for further scrutiny.
- The **Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI)** has raised concerns over the FCRA Amendment Bill with the Union Government.
- The article **promotes voluntary financial transparency through audited accounts and disclosure of major funding sources** to build public trust while protecting institutional autonomy.

Implications:

- Tighter rules may restrict genuine **charitable, educational and healthcare activities**.
- Minority institutions may feel **disproportionately targeted**.
- Lack of financial disclosure weakens **public trust** in institutions.
- **Unproven allegations regarding donations can damage institutional reputations** if not addressed openly.

Way Forward:

- Use the **JPC** for reasoned debate and careful

scrutiny of the Bill.

- **Ensure foreign contribution rules** do not suppress legitimate charitable work.
- Encourage institutions to publish **audited annual accounts and major funding sources** voluntarily.
- **Ensure disclosure rules protect** personal information and institutional independence

Mains Question:

Discuss the importance of transparency in maintaining the credibility of minority institutions in India, and how it complements their autonomy and accountability. (250 Words, 15 marks)

Strategic autonomy must guide India's Starlink policy

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

Why in Focus?

- **Elon Musk accused Indian "oligarchs" of blocking Starlink's entry into India**, but the government said that **all satellite operators must follow the same regulatory process**.

Oligarchs: A small group of extremely wealthy and influential individuals who exercise significant control over a country's economy and political decisions.

Key Highlights:

- **Starlink is a satellite internet constellation operated by SpaceX**, built for reach and **it suits for isolated settlements, border regions, ships and disaster-hit areas**.
- This reach also **has military value, as Starlink can connect soldiers, drones, sensors and command centres** without traditional connectivity.
- **India can issue licences and impose fines**, but **SpaceX controls the satellites and software**.
- This creates a risk that the **service may continue despite Indian orders to shut it down or become unavailable when India needs it**.
- To address this, **India requires satellite operators to route Indian users' data through ground stations in India**, which allows monitoring and follow government orders.

Ground Stations: Earth-based facilities equipped with antennas that communicate with satellites and connect satellite networks to terrestrial internet and communication systems.

- **Enforcement remains difficult**, as **Iran's complaints have failed to stop the illegal use of Starlink**, whereas **SpaceX blocked Starlink terminals in Ukraine** that were being used by Russian forces, following a request from the Ukrainian government.
- **Dependence on foreign providers like Starlink creates national security risks**, as service disruptions or decisions by foreign governments could **affect India's critical communications**.

Implications:

- **India may not be able to fully control Starlink's services** during a crisis.
- **Failure of Indian ground stations** may disrupt satellite connectivity.
- **Poor ground connectivity** may leave remote areas dependent on Starlink.

Way Forward:

- Maintain strict **licensing conditions** and **strengthen India's ability to independently monitor** compliance.
- **Ensure backup connections and tested switching mechanisms** for military and essential services.
- **Diversify satellite internet providers across countries to avoid dependence** on a single company or country.
- Expand terrestrial connectivity through **BharatNet**, which had a working connection in only 30% of gram panchayats as of February 2026.

BharatNet: Launched in October 2011 by the Department of Telecommunications, Ministry of Communications as the National Optical

Fibre Network and renamed BharatNet in 2015 to provide high-speed broadband connectivity to Gram Panchayats through optical fibre networks.

Mains Question:

Discuss the strategic implications of allowing Starlink to operate in India and suggest measures to ensure national security and strategic autonomy in satellite internet services. (250 Words, 15 marks)

India's efforts to clean its air need not slow its economic growth

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1

Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3

Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

Why in Focus?

- India ranked **176 out of 177 countries** in the **2026 Environmental Performance Index (EPI)** and **175th in air quality**.
- This has raised concerns about whether **pollution control can keep pace with economic growth**, as over **20 lakh deaths in 2023** were linked to air pollution.

Environmental Performance Index: Published by Yale and Columbia Universities and it assesses countries using 47 indicators across 12 categories (e.g., air quality, water and sanitation, biodiversity, climate change, waste management and ecosystem vitality).

Key Highlights:

- India ranked **175th in the air quality ranking**, which measures how polluted the air is, and **88th in the air pollution ranking**, which measures the impact of pollution on human health.
- **Industry, power, transport and agriculture contribute to pollution but also drive economic development**, making emission reduction a difficult policy choice.
- **China** reduced pollution while maintaining economic growth, with **SO_2 emissions falling by 14% during 2005–10**
- India's electricity demand is expected to rise by **6.4% every year until 2030**, increasing the need for cleaner energy sources.
- In **July 2025**, India relaxed **SO_2 emission rules** for some coal-based power plants, **citing high costs, even though SO_2 contributes to air pollution**.
- **108 out of 130 NCAP cities** recorded lower **PM10 concentrations** in 2025–26 than in 2017–18 and **these improvements cannot be attributed to government policies alone**, **as geographical factors** (such as **weather, rainfall, wind patterns and local pollution sources**) may also have contributed.

NCAP Cities: These are the 130 cities identified under the National Clean Air Programme, a Central Government initiative launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change in 2019 to reduce air pollution, particularly particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5), through city-specific action plans and monitoring.

Implications:

- **Rising energy demand may increase air pollution** despite the use of cleaner technologies.
- **Relaxing pollution rules** for coal plants can worsen air quality.
- **Higher government spending** does not always lead to lower pollution.
- **Weather conditions make it difficult** to measure the actual impact of pollution-control policies.

Way Forward:

- **Evaluate programmes based on actual reductions in pollution exposure** rather than funds spent or projects launched.
- **Promote measures with multiple benefits**, such as cleaner industries, clean cooking and improved waste management.
- **Assess the health costs of pollution** before relaxing environmental standards.
- **Ensure transparent policy evaluation** so that effective measures can be identified and expanded.

Mains Question:

Examine the challenge of reducing air pollution while sustaining economic growth in India, and suggest how policy can be made more outcome-based. (250 words, 15 marks)

KEYWORDS

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

- **Why in News?:** The expansion of **Starlink's satellite internet services** has highlighted **the role of ITU in coordinating satellite frequencies and orbital positions** to prevent signal interference.
- Established in **1865** as the International Telegraph Union, it became a **specialised agency of the United Nations in 1947**.
- It is the UN's specialised agency for **Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)**, headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.
- It has **193 member states** and around **900 private companies, universities and international organisations**; India has been a member since **1869**.
- Its key functions include allocating **global radio spectrum and satellite orbits**, developing international telecommunication standards and improving internet access in underserved areas.

Booker Prize

- **Why in News?:** British author **M. John Harrison** won the **2026 Booker Prize** for his novel **The End of Everything**.
- Established in **1969**, it is awarded annually by the **Booker Prize Foundation (based in London)** for the best work of long-form fiction written in English and published in the **UK and/or Ireland**.
- It is open to authors of **any nationality**, and **only publishers can submit eligible books** for consideration.
- The novel must be an **original work in English (not a translation)**
- It must be **published by a registered UK or Irish imprint**; self-published novels are not eligible
- The winner receives **£50,000**, while each of the other five shortlisted authors receives **£2,500**.
- The **2026 winner**, M. John Harrison, became the **oldest Booker Prize winner at 81**

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)

- **Why in News?:** The GCC has approved an advanced headquarters for its **Unified Military Command in Kuwait** to strengthen collective defence and regional security.
- Established on **25 May 1981**, the GCC is a regional political, economic and security alliance headquartered in **Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**.
- It comprises **six member countries**: **Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)**.
- Its key objectives include promoting **economic integration, regional security, political coordination and cooperation** among member states.
- India maintains strong ties with the GCC in **energy, trade, investment and diaspora relations**; negotiations for an **India-GCC Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** were formally launched in February 2026.



Places in News

Jamaica

- **Why in News?: Jamaica has asked for a legal opinion on whether Britain should compensate Jamaicans** for the historical enslavement of Africans.
- Jamaica is an **island country in the Caribbean Sea**, forming part of the **Greater Antilles**.
- Its capital and largest city is **Kingston**, and it is **located south of Cuba and west of Hispaniola**.
- It is a member of the **Caribbean Community (CARICOM)** and the **Commonwealth of Nations**.
- Its economy depends on **tourism, bauxite mining and alumina production**, making it an important producer of bauxite.
- **CARICOM** was established in **1973** under the **Treaty of Chaguaramas**, it is a regional organisation of Caribbean countries comprising **15 member states to promote economic integration and regional cooperation**.
- **Commonwealth of Nations is a voluntary association** of **56 independent countries**, mostly former British territories, formally established through the **London Declaration of 1949** to promote democracy, human rights and cooperation



Dibang Multipurpose Project

- **Why in News?:** The **Dibang Adi Students Union** organised a solidarity rally raising concerns over the environmental and social impacts of the under-construction **Dibang Multipurpose Project**.
- Located across the **Dibang River**, a tributary of the **Brahmaputra**, in the **Lower Dibang Valley district of Arunachal Pradesh**, the project is being developed by **NHPC Limited**.
- With an installed capacity of **2,880 MW (12 × 240 MW)**, it is one of India's largest hydropower projects.
- It features a **278-metre-high concrete gravity dam**, which will be among the highest dams in India upon completion.
- **Besides generating around electricity**, the project aims to provide **flood moderation** in downstream areas, particularly during the monsoon.



Corrigendum: An error was identified in yesterday's content regarding the CPCB Air Quality Index (AQI) colour classification. The corrected information is provided below.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) has six colour codes: Green (0–50) – Good; Light Green (51–100) – Satisfactory; Yellow (101–200) – Moderate; Orange (201–300) – Poor; Red (301–400) – Very Poor; and Dark Red/Maroon (401–500) – Severe.