

FINDER

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FORTUNE IAS NEWS DAILY EXPLAINER

The enduring democratic message of a royal charter

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 2
Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate

1. Magna Carta and its Historical Importance

- **Magna Carta** means “**Great Charter**” in Latin. It was signed by **King John of England** in **1215** at **Runnymede** near Windsor.
- It is considered an important milestone in the development of the **due process of law, rule of law, citizens’ rights**, and limits on the powers of rulers.
- Rebel barons forced King John to accept that even the **King is subject to law** and cannot rule arbitrarily.
- Magna Carta later became a symbol of **democracy, due process**, and **checks and balances** in governance.

2. King Charles III’s Speech and its Message

- In a speech to the **U.S. Congress**, **King Charles III** referred to the Magna Carta and received strong applause.
- He highlighted that Magna Carta made **executive power subject to checks and balances**.
- The speech indirectly reminded leaders that governments and rulers must remain accountable to the **law** and democratic institutions.
- The address also showed the historical connection between the **United Kingdom** and the **United States** through shared democratic values.

3. Magna Carta’s Global Influence

- **Mahatma Gandhi** described **Queen Victoria’s Proclamation of 1858** as a type of Magna Carta for Indians.

- **Eleanor Roosevelt** called the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights** the “international Magna Carta of all men everywhere.”
- **Winston Churchill** praised Magna Carta as a law that stands **above the King**.
- Across the world, Magna Carta is viewed as a symbol of **justice, human rights**, and **constitutional governance**.

4. Relevance to Modern Democracies

- Governments must act with **fairness, transparency**, and respect for the **rule of law**.
- Democratic institutions like the **legislature** and **judiciary** must prevent misuse of power by elected governments.
- It warns against dangers such as **majoritarianism**, manipulation of public emotions, and threats to democracy.
- **Ethical governance** and **constitutional morality** are essential for protecting and strengthening modern democracies.

A new phase in the India-Vietnam strategic partnership

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Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

1. Growing India-Vietnam Strategic Partnership

- Vietnamese President **Tô Lâm’s** visit to India marked a major step in strengthening **India-Vietnam relations**.
- Both countries upgraded ties to an **Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**.
- Agreements were signed in areas such as **defence, technology, finance**, and **energy**.

- Shared concerns over an assertive **China** and **Indo-Pacific security** have **strengthened cooperation**.

2. Defence and Security Cooperation

- **Defence cooperation** has become the core pillar of the partnership.
- India **transferred the missile corvette INS Kirpan** to Vietnam in 2023.
- India has provided **training assistance**, financial support, and maritime cooperation initiatives.
- Discussions on exporting **BrahMos missiles** indicate a shift from simple capacity-building to stronger military capability enhancement.

3. Economic and Regional Importance

- Bilateral trade has crossed **\$16 billion**, with a target of **\$25 billion by 2030**.
- Cooperation is expanding into **supply chain resilience**, **rare earth minerals**, and **digital payments**.
- Vietnam is important for India's effort to reduce dependence on **China-centric supply chains**.
- Vietnam's strong **manufacturing sector and strategic role** in **ASEAN** make it an important partner for India's deeper engagement in the **Indo-Pacific** and **Southeast Asia**.

4. Challenges and Future Prospects

- Both countries must **convert strategic understanding into practical outcomes**.
- Challenges remain in areas such as **trade, connectivity, and defence industrial cooperation**.
- Defence exports like **BrahMos** require **solutions to scientific, financial, and geopolitical challenges**.
- India-Vietnam relations are expected to become increasingly important in the evolving **Indo-Pacific strategic architecture**.

Physical activity has stalled for 20 years, hurting health and climate

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
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Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

1. Context

- Recent studies in **Nature Medicine** and **Nature Health** show **physical inactivity is a major global health issue**, causing **over 5 million deaths annually**.
- Globally, **1 in 3 adults** and **8 in 10 adolescents** do not meet **WHO guidelines for moderately intense physical activity** (150 min/week for adults, 60 min/day for children).
- Despite policies, **efforts remain insufficient with little real impact**.

2. Inequalities and Patterns

Income-based divide:

- High-income countries → **active leisure** (sports, exercise).
- Low-income countries → **active labour and transport**.

Gender and class gap:

- Leisure activity is dominated by **wealthy men**.
- **40 percentage-point gap** between rich men and poor women globally.

Health benefits:

- Prevents **cardiometabolic diseases, cancers, depression**, boosts **immunity**.
- During COVID-19 → **lower infection, severity, and mortality** among active people.

Lifecycle insight:

- Benefits possible **even if activity starts later in life**.

3. Structural, Climate, and Policy Gaps

LMIC(low and middle-income countries) reality:

- **84% of population in LMICs**, but research is **high-income biased**.
- Activity mostly **necessity-driven**, not leisure-based.

Climate change linkage (Nature Health study):

- Promoting **walking, cycling, and public transport** can **reduce emissions**.
- Climate change (heatwaves, floods) **reduces opportunities for physical activity**.
- Some urban policies (e.g., walkability projects) may cause **displacement of poor communities**.

Evidence gaps in LMICs:

- Lack of data on **informal settlements, rapid urbanisation zones**, and **high-risk climate regions**.
- Need for **indigenous and community knowledge**, not just Western models.

Policy gaps (661 policies, 200 countries):

- Only **38.7% multi-sectoral policies**.
- **26.5% lack measurable targets**.
- Issues: **individual-centric approach, weak coordination, unclear goals**.

4. Way Forward

- Shift from **individual responsibility to systemic solutions**.
- Invest in **infrastructure**: parks, sidewalks, cycling lanes, public transport.
- Ensure **multi-sectoral coordination** beyond the health sector.
- Integrate **climate + health strategies**.
- Focus on **equity (gender, class, LMIC needs)**.
- Improve **data systems** and enable **activity at all life stages**.

The article argues that **physical inactivity is not just a personal choice but a systemic issue shaped by inequality, infrastructure, and policy gaps**, requiring coordinated, equity-focused global action.

A decentralised solution for waste crisis

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Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

1. Context

- India faces a **severe waste crisis**: plastic-clogged drains causing floods, landfills emitting **methane, fires, and leachate**, and **open burning polluting air**.
- Both urban and rural areas are affected by **plastic, sanitary waste, pesticide containers, and e-waste**.
- The **Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026** (effective **April 1, 2026**) replace the 2016 Rules.
- Aim to improve **segregation, scientific processing, landfill reduction, circular economy, and digital monitoring**.
- However, **good environmental intent does not ensure good administrative design**.

2. Federalism and Centralisation Issues

- Framed under **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 (Article 253)**, allowing Centre to legislate on State subjects.
- Should ensure **minimum standards**, but risks **over-centralisation**.
- **Subsidiarity principle ignored**:
 - ➔ Decisions should be taken at the **local level**, but India favours central control.
- **Nobel Laureate, Hayek's knowledge problem**:
 - ➔ Local conditions require **context-specific solutions**, not uniform central rules.
- **Capacity concern**:
 - ➔ States' capacity weakens when reduced to **implementing agencies** (Arrow: learning by doing).

3. Design and Implementation Gaps

- Waste management is **highly local**, depending on behaviour, infrastructure, and geography → uniform rules are unsuitable.
- **Rural issues**:
 - ➔ Panchayats lack **staff, funds, and technical capacity**.
 - ➔ Complex systems like **MRFs (Material Recovery Facility) and multi-stream segregation are unrealistic**.

- **Urban issues:**
 - ➔ Megacities need **strong institutions (Metropolitan Waste Authorities)**.
- **Operational gaps:**
 - ➔ No **phased rollout** (Should have started with **megacities → large towns → small towns → rural areas**).
 - ➔ Central portal risks **data-reporting focus over service delivery**.
 - ➔ Weak **citizen participation mechanisms** in urban areas.
 - ➔ **Funding gaps** may lead to poor or fake compliance.

4. Way Forward & Conclusion

- Allow States to act as **“policy laboratories”** and experiment with solutions.

The “laboratory of States” approach, articulated by Justice Louis Brandeis (U.S Supreme court), means **States can experiment with different policies locally so that successful models can later be adopted more widely**.

- Adopt **minimum national standards + State flexibility + empowered local bodies**.
- Ensure **adequate funding, decentralised governance, and citizen participation**.

Conclusion:

- The article argues that **over-centralised rules may lead to compliance on paper rather than real waste management**, and success depends on **federal, locally adaptable solutions**.

KEYWORDS

National Commission for Women (NCW)

- The **National Commission for Women (NCW)** was established as a **statutory body** in **January 1992** under the **National Commission for Women Act, 1990**.
- It was created to review **constitutional and legal safeguards** for women, recommend legislative reforms, address grievances, and advise the government on policies related to women.
- The **Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI)** had recommended the creation of the NCW to monitor women’s issues, ensure grievance redressal, and promote the **socio-economic development** of women.
- The **NCW** works to promote **gender equality** and ensure women’s equal participation in all areas through policies, laws, welfare schemes, and measures against **discrimination** and **violence against women**.

Places in news

BedrettoLab



- The **Bedretto Underground Laboratory (BedrettoLab)**, operated by **ETH Zurich**, is located **1.5 km beneath the Swiss Alps in Switzerland**, inside a **5.2 km tunnel**, providing a **realistic underground environment** to study deep rock formations.

- It hosts the **FEAR (Fault Activation and Earthquake Rupture) experiment**, where scientists **inject high-pressure water into faults** to create **controlled micro-earthquakes** and study how earthquakes occur.
- Using **advanced seismic and fiber-optic sensors**, researchers monitor these quakes to understand **early warning signals and earthquake behaviour**.
- The lab also aims to develop **safe geothermal energy techniques** by testing ways to **fracture deep rocks** without causing **dangerous earthquakes**.
- It supports **multidisciplinary research**, including the **DELOS project**, which studies **microbial life deep inside the Earth under extreme conditions**.

