

FCRA Bill — expanding state control over civil society

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

Mains: General Studies - 2
Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

1. FCRA (Amendment) Bill, 2026: Key Provisions and Changes

- The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 25 March 2026.
- The **Bill introduces Chapter IIIA, creating a new framework for government oversight of assets acquired** through foreign contributions.
- **Proposed Section 14B enables automatic cessation of FCRA registration due to procedural lapses** such as delayed renewal applications.
- Proposed Section 16A allows assets **linked to foreign contributions to be vested in a government-designated authority.**
- The Bill **restricts organisations from managing their assets during suspension** without prior approval.
- It **centralises enforcement by requiring Union Government approval for State-level investigations** into FCRA violations.

2. What are the major concerns regarding the asset-vesting provisions of the Bill?

- **Assets may be taken over through administrative action** without prior judicial scrutiny.
- Vesting can occur even when registration lapses due to procedural or disputed violations.
- The **Designated Authority is empowered to manage, transfer, or dispose of vested assets.**

- **Proceeds from the sale of such assets may be credited** to the Consolidated Fund of India.
- The **broad use of the term “public interest” raises concerns about arbitrary exercise** of executive power.

3. How could the Bill affect NGOs and charitable institutions in India?

- **Threatens operations of NGOs, charitable trusts, educational and religious institutions** dependent on foreign funding.
- **Smaller organisations are particularly vulnerable** due to procedural compliance burdens.
- **Suspension provisions can effectively paralyse organisational activities** and service delivery.
- **Potential disruption of services related to health, education, child welfare, nutrition, and skill development.**
- **May create a chilling effect on donors, trustees, volunteers,** and civil society participation.

4. What constitutional and governance issues are associated with the FCRA (Amendment) Bill, 2026?

- Critics argue that the Bill grants extensive discretionary powers to the executive with limited independent oversight.
- The **provisions may raise concerns regarding the freedom of association guaranteed under Article 19(1)(c).**
- Could **impact Articles 25 & 26 concerning religious freedom and management of religious institutions.**
- Raises issues under Articles 29 & 30 **relating to minority educational institutions.**
- **Potentially affects Article 300A,** which protects property from deprivation except by authority of law.
- The Bill has renewed discussions on balancing national security, transparency, and the independence of civil society organisations.

Implementation complete, but workers still vulnerable

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

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Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

1. Background

- The **rules for the four Labour Codes were notified in May 2026, completing their implementation** framework nearly six years after enactment.
- The **four codes are the Code on Wages, 2019; Industrial Relations Code, 2020; Code on Social Security, 2020; and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code (OSHWC), 2020.**
- Trade unions and academics have criticised several provisions and rules as regressive, arguing that they inadequately protect workers' rights and welfare.

2. What are the concerns regarding Fixed-Term Employment (FTE) under the Industrial Relations Code, 2020?

- FTE has been **formally introduced into India's labour law framework.**
- The **Code does not prescribe a minimum tenure for fixed-term workers.**
- **No limit has been placed** on the number of contract renewals.
- Regular jobs **may be converted into continuously renewed FTE positions.**
- Rules fail to clarify engagement and renewal conditions, creating scope for misuse.

3. What are the shortcomings of the Code on Wages (Central) Rules?

- The **definition of "floor wage" remains vague and is not clearly distinguished** from minimum wage.
- **No detailed framework exists for consultation** with State governments.

- **Rules do not specify clear principles** for fixing minimum wages.
- **Hourly wages are calculated by dividing daily wages by eight**, instead of fixing independent hourly wage rates.

4. Why do gig workers and trade unions remain vulnerable under the new rules?

- **Gig and platform workers continue to be treated as self-employed** and part of the unorganised sector.
- **Rules do not clarify the employment relationship** in the gig economy.
- Mandatory gratuity insurance envisaged under the Code **lacks implementation guidelines.**
- A sole registered trade union requires at least 30% membership for recognition.
- **Smaller and newly formed unions may struggle to gain recognition**, weakening collective bargaining.

5. What worker welfare and occupational safety safeguards are missing in the OSHWC Rules?

- **Certain occupation-specific welfare measures, such as housing and medical facilities** for plantation workers, are absent.
- **Rules do not specify activities for which contract labour** may be engaged.
- No clear distinction is made between core and non-core activities.
- Lack of clarity creates ambiguity and increases the scope for misuse by employers.
- **While the Labour Codes aim to simplify and modernise labour regulation, their success will ultimately depend on ensuring that flexibility for employers** is balanced with adequate protection of workers' rights and welfare.

Contraceptive use and the weight women carry: insights from NFHS-6

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

Mains: General Studies - 1
Role of women and women's organization, population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues, urbanization, their problems and their remedies

1. What is reproductive agency and how is it reflected in NFHS-6?

- **Reproductive agency** means women’s power to decide **whether, when, and how to have children**, making it central to empowerment beyond income or education.
- India’s demographic transition shows a shift where **contraception is a marker of agency**, not just population control.
- Since the **1952 family planning programme**, women have borne **disproportionate responsibility** for contraception.
- National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-6 reflects **changing contraceptive behaviour**, but **full autonomy remains limited**.

The **National Family Health Survey (NFHS)** is a **large-scale, multi-round survey (NFHS-1 to NFHS-6)** conducted by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** to collect data on population, health, and nutrition in India.

2. How does early marriage affect reproductive agency?

- **20.1% of women (20-24)** married before **18**; **rural: 23.3%** (unchanged from NFHS-5).
- **15.9% of men (25-29)** married before **21**.
- **6.7% of women (15-19)** are **mothers/pregnant (7.9% rural)**.
- Early marriage leads to **longer reproductive span, low education, and weak decision-making power**.
- Results in **high fertility, closely spaced births, anaemia, and maternal health risks**.
- It is a **reproductive health crisis**, often **ignored in fertility policy**.

3. What are the trends in contraceptive use and sterilisation?

- **Female sterilisation dominates: 36.5% (38.1% rural); male sterilisation only 0.5%**.
- **Decline in female sterilisation: 37.9% → 36.5%**.
- **Traditional methods increased: 10.3% → 16.4%**.

- **Modern reversible methods(prevent pregnancy temporarily) declined: 56.4% → 52.7%**.
- Indicates **limited shift to safer methods** and **continued gender imbalance**.

4. What are the challenges and policy imperatives?

- **Public health issues:** overcrowded facilities, **poor training, target-driven sterilisation**, and **health risks** (e.g., **Bilaspur tragedy, 2014**).

- **Bilaspur sterilisation tragedy (2014):** In Chhattisgarh’s Bilaspur district, 13 women died after undergoing mass sterilisation surgeries in a government camp conducted under unsafe and unhygienic conditions.
- **Significance:** The incident exposed systemic failures in India’s public health system, including negligence, poor infrastructure, and the coercive, target-driven approach to female sterilisation.

- **Rural-urban divide:** rural women face **early marriage, low agency, weak access**; urban women fare better.
- Women often lack **informed choice** due to **socio-economic constraints**.
- Policy priorities:
 - **Address early marriage** through **education + legal enforcement**.
 - **Promote reversible, scientific contraception** via public healthcare.
 - **Reduce gender skew** by increasing **male participation**.
 - Ensure demographic transition is based on **enhancing reproductive agency**, not just **fertility control**.

Why is Nicobar debating elections?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 2
Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

1. What do the draft rules propose?

- The **Draft Andaman & Nicobar Islands Tribal Councils (Preparation of Electoral Rolls and Conduct of Elections) Rules, 2026** propose a **formal election-based system** for Nicobarese self-governance.
- Elections would be held **every 5 years** for **Village Councils** and **Tribal Councils**.
- Villagers would directly elect **5-9 Captains** and a **Chief Captain** for each Island Tribal Council.
- The rules also provide for:
 - ➔ **Delimitation of constituencies**
 - ➔ **Preparation of electoral rolls**
 - ➔ **Reservation of seats and leadership positions for women**
 - ➔ Detailed procedures for **nomination, candidature, voting, and administration**.
- These rules are framed under the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Tribal Councils) Regulation, 2009**, which gives the district administration (through the Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner) the **power to veto council decisions deemed harmful to public order**.

2. How do Nicobarese Tribal Councils function at present?

- The **Nicobarese**, a **Scheduled Tribe** of about **30,000 people**, are represented through traditional **Tribal Councils** and **Village Captains**.
- Each village generally has **three Captains**:
 - ➔ **First Captain**
 - ➔ **Second Captain**
 - ➔ **Third Captain**
- There are **seven Tribal Councils** across the Nicobar Islands.
- The system evolved from the traditional **Captaincy structure**, which **emerged during interactions with colonial-era ships and was later recognised by the British**.
- Tribal Councils became prominent in the **1990s** to **facilitate interaction with government development programmes**.
- Decisions are generally taken through **community consultations and village meetings**, rather than by individual leaders.

3. How are leaders currently selected?

- Leadership selection is based largely on **community consensus** rather than fixed-term elections.
- Villagers **gather in meetings and nominate candidates**.
- Ballots are prepared and conducted **by the community itself**.
- Elections are held **when the community feels necessary**, not necessarily on a fixed schedule.
- **Factors influencing candidate selection** include:
 - ➔ **Education**
 - ➔ **Fluency in Hindi**
 - ➔ **Exposure to the outside world**
- Ability to **interact effectively** with officials ("**smartness**")
- Captains are viewed as **community representatives**, not lawmakers with unilateral powers.

4. Why are the proposed changes causing concern?

- Many Nicobarese leaders fear the new system will **bureaucratise traditional governance** and **weaken customary practices**.
- The proposed structure is seen as replacing **consensus-based decision-making** with a **formal electoral and administrative framework**.
- Some community members suspect the move may be linked to opposition by the **Great Nicobar Tribal Council** to the **₹91,000-crore Great Nicobar development project**.
- Critics argue:
 - ➔ The draft does not adequately recognise the traditional **Tuhet (joint family) system**.
 - ➔ There was **insufficient consultation** with the community before drafting the rules.
 - ➔ Many islanders may **not have enough time or resources to fully understand the implications of the reforms**.
- The **Congress party in Andaman & Nicobar Islands** has demanded withdrawal of the draft rules, citing **concerns over consultation and traditional governance structures**.

KEYWORDS

Nipah virus

- Kerala has been placed on alert after a suspected Nipah virus infection was detected in Kozhikode district
- Nipah virus is a **zoonotic virus belonging to the genus Henipavirus and can spread from animals to humans as well as through human-to-human transmission.**
- **Fruit bats (Pteropus spp.),** commonly known as flying foxes, are the natural reservoir hosts of the virus.
- The **virus can spread through contact with infected animals, consumption of contaminated fruits or raw date palm sap,** and close contact with infected persons.
- Nipah infection can **cause acute respiratory illness and encephalitis (brain inflammation),** with symptoms ranging from fever and headache to seizures and coma.
- Nipah has a **high case fatality rate (40–75%).**

Shigellosis (Shigella Infection)

- Kerala has been placed on high alert following a rise in Shigella (shigellosis) cases among children.
- Shigella infection is a **highly contagious intestinal bacterial infection caused by four species: Shigella sonnei, Shigella flexneri, Shigella boydii, and Shigella dysenteriae.**
- It **primarily spreads through contact with contaminated stool, often via poor hand hygiene,** unsafe water, or contaminated food.
- Common symptoms include diarrhea, stomach cramps, fever, nausea, and vomiting.
- **Children below five years of age are the most vulnerable,** although infection can occur at any age.
- There is **currently no vaccine against shigellosis;** prevention relies on proper handwashing, safe drinking water, and good food hygiene practices.

Places In News

Guinea-Bissau

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- **Guinea-Bissau** is a country in **West Africa,** located along the **Atlantic Ocean.**
- It is bordered by **Senegal** to the north, **Guinea** to the east and south, and the **Atlantic Ocean** to the west.
- The country is largely **low-lying,** with some **hilly terrain inland,** and includes the **Bijagós (Bissagos) Archipelago** and several other offshore islands.
- Guinea-Bissau experiences a **tropical climate,** strongly influenced by the **Intertropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ)**-a belt of converging trade winds that encircles the Earth near the **Equator.**
- The country's coastline is characterized by a complex network of **drowned river valleys,** known as **rias,** which form numerous inlets and estuaries along the coast.

Kharg Island

- **Kharg Island** has entered **global headlines** after **U.S. President Donald Trump** threatened to **seize the island** and **target its critical energy infrastructure** during escalating **tit-for-tat military strikes with Iran.**

- It is a **strategic continental island** located in the **northeastern Persian Gulf**, under the **political jurisdiction of Iran**, and **strategically linked to the Strait of Hormuz**, a **critical global maritime chokepoint**.
- The island functions as **Iran's primary maritime crude oil export terminal**, handling an estimated **90% of the country's total crude oil exports**, and is equipped with **deep-water berths** that allow **multiple supertankers to dock and load simultaneously**.
- Unlike most small islands in the Persian Gulf, **Kharg Island possesses natural freshwater resources**, a significant geographical advantage that has enabled **continuous human settlement** and its role as a **historic maritime trading post**.
- Beyond its modern industrial role, the island has **immense archaeological significance**, featuring **Achaemenid cuneiform inscriptions**, **rock-cut tombs**, and the **ruins of a large 7th-century Christian monastic complex**.

