

Analysing India's cycle of deprivation and affluence

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Economic and Social Development-Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 3
Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

1. Background

- India's recent economic experience shows **sharp income mobility shifts** rather than steady, broad-based progress.
- Real per capita income data** from 2014-2025 from Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)'s **Consumer Pyramids Household Survey** are used to track movements into and out of deprivation and affluence.
- Households are classified into the **top 10%, next 40%, and bottom 50%**, with mobility measured against their **2014 income position**.

2. Key Trends in Income Mobility (2014-2025)

- Downward mobility nearly doubled**, from 14% (2015) to 26.8% (2025); by 2025, over one in four households were worse off than in 2014.
- Upward mobility rose modestly** from 14.1% to 23.5%, but **consistently lagged behind downward movement**.
- Economic stability weakened**, with households staying in the same income group falling from over 70% to below 50%.
- Rural households were hit harder**: nearly 29% slipped downward by 2025, while **urban areas performed better** but with uneven gains.

3. Social, Caste and Religious Fault Lines

- Downward mobility increased across all caste groups**, with **sharp rises among OBC and SC households**;
 - By 2025, about **one-fourth or more** were worse off than in 2014.
- SC households saw fewer chances to move up**, showing persistent **structural barriers**.
- Scheduled Tribes experienced relatively lower downward mobility** and some upward movement, possibly due to targeted support.
- Across religions, downward mobility increased for all**, especially among Hindus and Muslims;
- Muslim households showed weaker upward mobility**, indicating discrimination-related constraints.
- Higher **inequality at the district level** is linked to greater downward mobility, showing that **inequality locks households into disadvantage**.

4. Implications and Policy Direction

- The economy shows **more households slipping down than climbing up**, threatening social stability.
- Growth without mobility** risks replacing **aspiration with frustration**.
- Policy must **shift beyond headline growth** to strengthen public health, education, employment-intensive sectors, and social protection.
- Addressing **social and religious discrimination** is essential not just for welfare, but for **restoring income mobility and trust in economic progress**

The shift of critical minerals to India's strategic centre

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

Mains: General Studies - 3
Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

1. Context

- Until three years ago, **critical minerals lacked strategic priority** and **private mining was restricted by atomic mineral classification**.
- The latest Union Budget signals a major shift:
 - ➔ **Critical minerals are now central to industrial, energy, and geopolitical strategy.**
 - ➔ The focus has **shifted from making a policy to implementing it effectively.**

2. Policy Momentum and Institutional Framework

- India has **listed 30 critical minerals** and launched the **National Critical Mineral Mission (₹16,300 crore) to boost the sector.**

The **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)** was **launched in 2025** to build a strong framework for **self-reliance in the critical minerals** sector. The mission has a total outlay of **₹34,300 crore over seven years** to boost exploration, mining, and processing capacity.

- Mineral security depends on strong execution, not just policy ambition.
- **China dominates mineral processing, but India can produce some high-purity minerals** like copper and rare earth oxides.
- India **needs better technology and more capacity to support clean energy needs.**

3. Key Priority areas

Create strong domestic demand

- Remove import duties on processing equipment.
- **Ensure strong domestic demand by promoting local EVs, batteries, solar, and wind industries.**

Adopt an AI-first exploration approach

- **NCMM targets 1,200 exploration projects** by FY2031.
- **Tax deductions** for exploration of nine critical minerals.
- **Use AI tools** (IndiaAI Mission and Mission Anveshan) to **improve mineral discovery** and reduce risk.

Build tech sovereignty

- **Develop rare earth corridors** in coastal states.
- **Expand domestic rare earth processing to cut import dependence** and create jobs.

4. International Partnerships and Coordinated Action

- **Strengthen partnerships with Australia, Europe, Japan, the UK, and the US** for advanced mineral processing and technology.
- **Encourage foreign firms to set up processing facilities** in India.
- **Ensure strong legal frameworks**, and market access.
- **Strengthen global research collaboration** and institutional links (e.g: UK-India Critical Minerals Supply Chain Observatory).
- Hence, **India can secure leadership in critical minerals** through coordinated central, state, and global action.

Why bulldozers threaten due process

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

Mains: General Studies - 2
Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries

1. Concept of "Bulldozer Justice"

- Refers to **demolition of properties** linked to persons **accused of crimes**, often soon after an **FIR is registered**.
- Seen prominently in **Uttar Pradesh**.
- Bypasses the constitutional sequence of: **Allegation - Investigation - Adjudication - Punishment**.
- Converts **executive discretion** into **instant punishment** without **due process**.

2. Legal & Constitutional Framework

- Municipal laws like the **U.P. Municipal Corporation Act, 1959** and **U.P. Urban Planning and Development Act, 1973** allows demolition of **unauthorised constructions**.
- However, they require:
 - ⊖ **Written notice**
 - ⊖ **Opportunity to respond**
 - ⊖ **Consideration of objections**
 - ⊖ **An official decision that clearly explains the reasons behind it.**
 - ⊖ **Appeal provisions**
- These laws regulate **building violations**, not **criminal guilt**.
- Under **Articles 14 and 21**, the Constitution guarantees:
 - ⊖ **Equality before law**
 - ⊖ **Right to life and personal liberty**
- Demolition cannot occur merely because someone is **accused**, as it violates **presumption of innocence**.

3. Supreme Court & High Court Observations

- Regarding **Directions in the Matter of Demolition of Structures (2024)**, the **Supreme Court** held:
 - ⊖ Property cannot be demolished **solely due to criminal allegations**.
 - ⊖ **Municipal powers** cannot be transformed into **parallel instruments of punishment**.
- The **Allahabad High Court** framed key questions:
 - ⊖ Can the mere apprehension of **demolition infringe fundamental rights**?
 - ⊖ What **standards** should **guide preventive judicial intervention**?
 - ⊖ What mechanisms **ensure accountability exists when municipal powers are misapplied**?

4. Broader Implications & Rule of Law

- Demolitions cause **irreversible harm**, even if the accused is later **found innocent**.
- Undermines:
 - ⊖ **Separation of powers**

- ⊖ **Administrative neutrality**
- ⊖ **Public confidence in governance**
- The Constitution mandates:
 - ⊖ **Procedure established by law**
 - ⊖ **Notice and hearing**
 - ⊖ **Judicial oversight**
- Bulldozers have a legitimate role in urban management, not instruments of punishment.
- Protecting this distinction is essential to uphold the **Rule of Law**.

What changed in Hong Kong after National Security Law?

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

Mains: General Studies - 2
Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

1. Increasing Control by Beijing

- Since **Xi Jinping** came to power in **2013**, China has tightened control over **Hong Kong**.
- Gradual **assimilation with mainland China** has raised concerns about the **"One Country, Two Systems"** model.
- The biggest turning point was the **National Security Law (NSL), 2020**, which reshaped Hong Kong's **political, judicial, and media systems**.

2. Major Protests & Political Tensions

2014 Umbrella Movement:

- Beijing proposed that **Hong Kong residents could vote for the Chief Executive**, but **only from a list of candidates approve by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)**.
- The protest lasted **79 days**, later cleared by police.

2019 Extradition Bill Protests:

- Opposed the law allowing suspects to be sent to **mainland China for trial**.
- Critics feared **arbitrary detention and unfair trials**.
- The bill was withdrawn, but protests continued demanding **greater democracy**.

- Beijing labelled unrest as “**terrorism**” and suppressed protests.

Crackdowns reduced political freedoms promised under **Basic Law**.

3. National Security Law (2020)

- Criminalises:
 - ➔ **Secession**-which is breaking away from China.
 - ➔ **Subversion** - which is undermining the power or authority of the central government.
 - ➔ **Terrorism**
 - ➔ **Collusion with foreign forces**
- Around **260 arrests** and **76 convictions** under NSL.
- Strengthened Beijing’s authority and limited **dissent**.

4. Impact on Media & Identity

Media Crackdown:

- **The kidnapping of five Hong Kong book sellers** by Beijing in 2015 heavily impacted its media freedom.
 - ➔ Authorities cited the **sale of banned books in mainland China** as grounds for legal action.
- **Jimmy Lai**, founder of **Apple Daily**, prosecuted; newspaper shut down.
- **Stand News** closed; journalists arrested for **sedition**.
- Result: Severe restriction of **media freedom**.

Identity Shift:

- Hong Kong’s identity was based on **autonomy under Basic Law**.
- Increasing control has weakened its **distinct political and economic system**.
- Critics argue Hong Kong’s identity is now being fully absorbed into a **Party-approved Chinese identity**.

KEYWORDS

I2U2 Grouping

- I2U2 is a **minilateral grouping** of **India, Israel, the United States, and the United Arab Emirates**, announced in **July 2022**.
- It is an **informal, issue-based, geoeconomic initiative**, focused on **practical cooperation** rather than security alliances.
- The grouping aims to **mobilise private sector capital and technology** to address shared challenges.
- **Six priority sectors** are identified: **food security, energy, water, transportation, space, and health**.
- Key projects include an **India-based food corridor** (with Israeli-US technology and UAE investment) and a **hybrid renewable energy project in Gujarat**.

RailTech Policy

- RailTech Policy was announced in **February 2026** by Ashwini Vaishnaw, Union Railway Minister.
- It aims to **promote innovation and start-ups** in the railway sector.
- A **dedicated innovation portal** will allow open submission of technology proposals.
- Indian Railways will provide **up to 50% funding** for development of selected innovations.
- The policy shifts from **rigid vendor-based procurement** to a **trial-and-adoption model**.
- Successful innovations will receive **long-term orders for scaling**.
- Key **focus areas** include:
 - ➔ **AI-based elephant intrusion** detection to prevent wildlife accidents
 - ➔ **AI fire detection** in coaches
 - ➔ Drone-based **broken rail detection**
 - ➔ Rail **stress monitoring** systems
 - ➔ Sensor-based **load calculation** for parcel vans

- ☉ **Solar panels** on coaches
- ☉ **AI-enabled monitoring** of coach cleaning

Shingles

- Shingles is a **viral infection caused by the varicella-zoster virus**, the same virus responsible for chickenpox.
- It usually **appears as a painful stripe of blisters on one side of the body**, along with symptoms like fever, headache, burning, or sensitivity.
- **Shingles is not directly contagious, but it can spread the virus to someone** who has never had chickenpox.
- A **vaccine called Shingrix helps prevent shingles** and its complications, particularly in older adults and those with weak immunity.

Mission Anveshan

- Mission Anveshan was **launched in 2024 by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas with an outlay of ₹792 crore** to reduce India's energy import dependence.
- It **aims to enhance domestic energy security by conducting advanced 2D and 3D seismic surveys** to identify untapped hydrocarbon reserves.
- The mission covers 20,275 line-kilometres of 2D seismic surveys across seven onshore sedimentary basins, including Ganga-Punjab and Krishna-Godavari.
- It **serves as a continuation of the National Seismic Programme** and involves PSUs like ONGC and Oil India.
- The initiative supports India's goal of achieving greater energy self-sufficiency by exploring frontier areas.

Fields Medal

- The **Fields Medal** is presented **every four years** at the **International Congress of Mathematicians (ICM)** to honour **exceptional achievements in mathematics**.

- It recognises both **completed work** and the recipient's **potential for future contributions**.
- The **Fields Medal Committee** is appointed by the **Executive Committee of the International Mathematical Union (IMU)** and is usually chaired by the **IMU President**.
- The **medals and monetary award** are financed through a **trust fund established by J. C. Fields at the University of Toronto**, which has been periodically supplemented over time.