

FWD

FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST



> 16TH FINANCE COMMISSION > THE UNION BUDGET 2026-27 > YOJANA DECEMBER 2025

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EDITOR'S NOTE

As UPSC aspirants, it is essential to stay updated on current affairs to excel in the examination. This **Fortune Weekly Digest (ForWarD)** brings you the latest news and developments from around the world, carefully curated and analyzed to help you prepare for the Civil Services (Main) Examination.

We understand that time is precious, and we have made sure to present the information in a concise and easy-to-understand manner.

The magazine is divided into different sections. Mains relevant topics have been covered in detail with a UPSC previous year question perspective. The jot downs are examples and interesting facts to enrich your answer writing. Cherrypicks has some key words from the week, helpful again in answer writing and essay. We have also included essay topics and sample questions to help you gauge your preparation.

We have designed this magazine to best supplement the daily current affairs notes we have launched by the name of **FIND (Fortune IAS News Daily)** and **FINDER (Fortune IAS News Daily Explainer)** and the **Fortune Prelims Precise** monthly compilation. This magazine will be explained in detail and your queries addressed in a live class we conduct.

At a time when there is no dearth of current affairs materials, our hope is help you get a one-stop solution for all your current affairs needs.

This magazine is a work in progress and your feedback will be appreciated.

We hope that this magazine will serve as a valuable resource for your exam preparation and contribute to your success in the UPSC examination.

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FIRST ATTEMPT TOPPERS FROM
OUR PRELIMS CUM MAINS BATCH

SWATHI S BABU
AIR 522

MANJIMA P
AIR 235

KASTURI SHA
AIR 68

FABI RASHEED
AIR 71

OORMILA J S
AIR 561

W O M E N I N P O W E R

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16TH FINANCE COMMISSION

Syllabus: GS II - Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities.

PYQ MAPPING

Q) Discuss the recommendations of the 13th Finance Commission which have been a departure from the previous commissions for strengthening the local government finances. **(2013)**

WHY IN NEWS

The 16th Finance Commission under the chairmanship of Dr. Arvind Panagariya has submitted its report for the period of 2026-31.

INTRODUCTION

The Finance Commission is a constitutional mechanism under Article 280 that periodically recalibrates fiscal relations between the Union and the States. The 16th Finance Commission, constituted for the period 2026–31, assumes significance amid evolving fiscal federal challenges, changing revenue structures and rising expenditure needs of States.

SHORT TAKES

- **Fiscal deficit:** The gap between a government's total expenditure and its total revenue (excluding borrowings) in a given year.
- **Revenue deficit:** The excess of a government's revenue expenditure (day-to-day spending like salaries, subsidies, pensions, and interest payments) over its revenue receipts (regular earnings from taxes and non-tax sources such as fees, dividends, and interest).
- **GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product):** The total monetary market value of all final goods and services produced within a state's geographical boundaries during a specific period (usually one year), serving as the state-level equivalent of a country's GDP.
- **DISCOM (Distribution Company):** A power sector utility responsible for distributing electricity from transmission networks to end consumers and managing billing, metering, and local supply infrastructure.

CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS OF FINANCE COMMISSION (FC)

- ➔ **Article 280 of the Constitution:**
 - Provides for the constitution of a Finance Commission every five years by the President to ensure fiscal balance in the federation.
 - Consists of a **Chairman and four members** appointed by the President with expertise in public finance, economics and administration.
- ➔ **Distribution of financial resources:** Recommends vertical sharing of taxes between Centre and States and horizontal distribution among States.
- ➔ **Grants-in-aid mechanism:** Suggests principles governing grants from the Consolidated Fund of India under Article 275.
- ➔ **Strengthening local governments:** Recommends measures to augment State resources for Panchayats and Municipalities based on State Finance Commission reports.
- ➔ **Advisory but influential role:** Recommendations are not binding but carry high constitutional weight; report is laid before Parliament under Article 281.

COMPOSITION OF 16TH FC

♣ Leadership:

- **Chairman:** Dr. Arvind Panagariya – Former Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog, appointed as Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission.
- **Full-time Member:** Annie George Mathew – Former Special Secretary-Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance
- **Full-time Member:** Dr. Manoj Panda – Former Director of the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi and the Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS), Hyderabad
- **Part-time Member:** T Rabi Sankar – Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India
- **Part-time Member:** Dr. Soumya Kanti Ghosh – Group Chief Economic Advisor, State Bank of India.
- **Secretary:** Ritvik Ranjanam Pandey – Secretary to the Commission (assists the members in their work).
- ♣ **Award period:** Constituted in December 2023 to recommend fiscal arrangements for 2026–27 to 2030–31.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The **Terms of Reference (ToR)** describe what the Commission must examine and recommend for the award period **2026–31** which include:

🔍 Distribution of Tax Proceeds:

- o Recommend the **division of net tax proceeds** between the Union and States under **Chapter I, Part XII** of the Constitution.
- o Allocate each **State's share** of divisible taxes fairly.

🔍 Grants-in-Aid to States:

- o Suggest **principles and amounts** for grants from

the **Consolidated Fund of India** under **Article 275**, excluding purposes explicitly exempted.

🔍 Augmentation of State Funds for Local Bodies

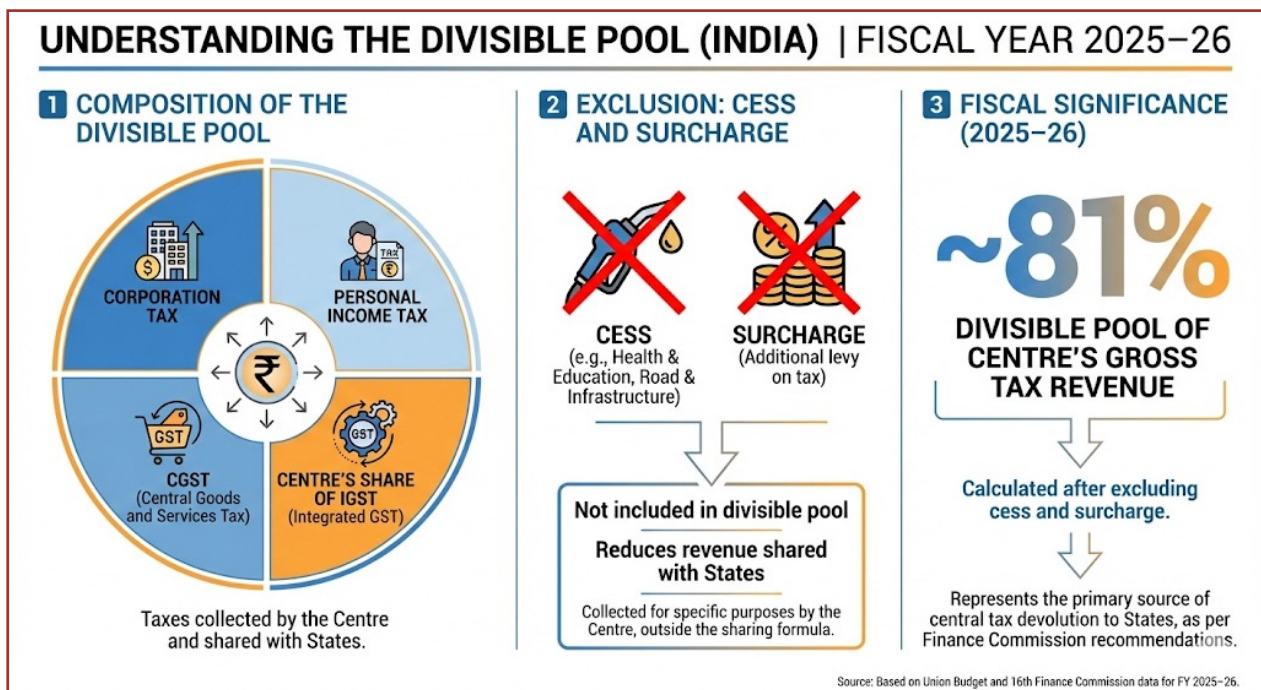
- o Recommend ways to **strengthen State Consolidated Funds** to support **Panchayats and Municipalities**, based on State Finance Commission advice.

🔍 Financing Disaster Management

- o Review current **funding arrangements under the Disaster Management Act, 2005**, and suggest improvements for effective disaster response.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 🔍 **Vertical Tax Devolution:** The Commission has **retained 41% vertical devolution of the divisible pool to states**, continuing the framework of the 15th Finance Commission.



- 🔍 **Horizontal criteria revised:** The 16th FC revised the horizontal devolution formula to balance equity, demographic responsibility, environmental conservation, and economic contribution.

- o **Income Distance (42.5%)** remains the largest factor, directing more resources to states with lower per capita GSDP to reduce regional disparities.
- o **Population (2011) at 17.5%** reflects relative service needs based on population size.
- o **Demographic Performance (10%)** rewards states with lower long-term population growth between

1971 and 2011.

- o **Area (10%)** compensates states facing higher administrative and infrastructure costs due to geographic size.
- o **Forest and Ecology (10%)** recognises both total forest cover and improvements in forest area, strengthening environmental incentives.
- o **Contribution to GDP (10%)** is a new parameter recognising states' economic contribution using a balanced GSDP-based measure.

The share for States

Till the 13th FC (2010-2015), the devolution involved specific transfers for Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) with extensive conditionalities

Table 1: Criteria for horizontal devolution amongst States

Criteria	13th FC 2010-15	14th FC 2015-20	15th FC 2020-26	16th FC 2026-31
Income distance	47.5	50	45	42.5
Population (1971)	25	17.5	-	-
Population (2011)	-	10	15	17.5
Area	10	15	15	10
Forests	-	7.5	10	10
Fiscal discipline	17.5	-	-	-
Demographic performance	-	-	12.5	10
Tax effort	-	-	2.5	-
State's contribution to GDP	-	-	-	10
Total	100	100	100	100



16th Finance Commission Devolution Share Recommendations: Comparison of States

State	Previous Share	New Share (%)	Change (%)	Trend
Andhra Pradesh	4.047%	4.217%	+0.170%	📈 Increase
Karnataka	3.647%	4.131%	+0.484%	📈 Increase
Kerala	1.925%	2.382%	+0.457%	📈 Increase
Tamil Nadu	4.079%	4.097%	+0.018%	📈 Increase
Telangana	2.102%	2.174%	+0.072%	📈 Increase
Uttar Pradesh	17.939%	17.619%	-0.320%	📉 Decrease
Bihar	10.058%	9.948%	-0.110%	📉 Decrease

Data based on 16th Finance Commission recommendations.

☀ Grants-in-Aid Structure (₹9.47 lakh crore)

- o The Commission prioritises **local government strengthening**, allocating the majority of grants to rural and urban local bodies with a mix of assured funding and performance-linked incentives.
- o Basic grants are partly untied and partly tied to **sanitation, waste management, and water services**, ensuring focus on essential civic infrastructure.
- o Urban bodies receive additional support for **wastewater infrastructure** and planned urban expansion through special and one-time grants.
- o **Disaster management funding** is provided through shared Centre–State financing, with higher central support for vulnerable regions.
- o Earlier **revenue deficit and sector-specific grants have been discontinued** to simplify transfers and reduce discretion.

Grants-in-aid for 2026–31 (in Rs crore)		Amount (in Rs crore)
Category		
Local governments		7,91,493
Rural local bodies		4,35,236
	Basic Grant	3,48,188
	Performance Grant	87,048
Urban local bodies		3,56,257
	Basic Grant	2,32,125
	Performance Grant	58,032
	Special Infrastructure Component	56,100
	Urbanisation Premium	10,000
Disaster management		1,55,916
Total		9,47,409

☀ Fiscal Consolidation Roadmap

- o The Union government is advised to reduce its fiscal deficit to **3.5% of GDP by 2030–31**, while states should maintain a **3% of GSDP deficit limit**.
- o The Commission recommends eliminating **off-budget borrowings** and including all liabilities within official fiscal accounts to improve transparency.
- o Combined public debt is projected to gradually decline, indicating a planned path toward fiscal sustainability.

☀ Power Sector Reforms

- o States are encouraged to pursue **DISCOM privatisation** to improve efficiency and financial viability.
- o Legacy debt should be transferred to **special purpose vehicles**, with repayment supported

through reform-linked capital assistance.

☀ Subsidy and Fiscal Transparency Reforms

- o States are advised to **rationalise subsidies**, strengthen targeting through clear eligibility criteria, and avoid off-budget financing of welfare schemes.
- o A **uniform framework for accounting and reporting subsidies** is recommended to ensure transparency and comparability across states.

☀ State Public Sector Enterprise Reforms

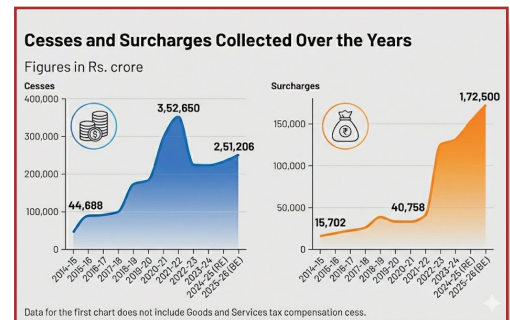
- o The Commission recommends **review and closure of inactive state enterprises** and adoption of structured disinvestment policies.
- o Persistently loss-making enterprises should undergo periodic Cabinet review to decide on closure, privatisation, or strategic continuation.

COMPARISON WITH 15TH FINANCE COMMISSION

Feature	15th FC	16th FC
Vertical share	41% for states	41% , unchanged
Horizontal criteria	Income, population, area, forest, demography, tax & fiscal effort	Revised weights; GDP contribution added , tax effort removed
Revenue Deficit Grants	Provided	Discontinued
Grant focus	Diverse sectoral and state-specific grants	Focus on local bodies & disaster management

CHALLENGES

- ☀ **States' fiscal pressures ignored:** 18 States demanded vertical devolution increase to 50%; others sought 45–48%, but it is unchanged despite demands to increase share.
- ☀ **Shrinking divisible pool:** Cesses and surcharges increased from ₹5–7 per ₹100 collected (2013–19) to ₹11–13.5 per ₹100 (2025–26), reducing shareable revenue.
- ☀ **Debate on equity vs efficiency:** New GDP contribution criterion may benefit richer states and reduce transfers to poorer ones.
- ☀ **Dependence on Centrally Sponsored Schemes:** A large share of increased transfers comes through **scheme-based funding tied to Union priorities** which constrains fiscal autonomy and reinforces a centralised implementation model.



WAY FORWARD

- ✦ **Rationalisation of cesses and surcharges:** Centre should gradually shift revenue collection back to standard taxes to expand the divisible pool.
- ✦ **Strengthening State finances:** States should implement reforms to improve efficiency, fiscal management, and revenue mobilisation.
- ✦ **Deepen cooperative fiscal federalism:** Institutionalised dialogue between Centre and States in fiscal decision-making.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations of the 16th Finance Commission aim to balance equity, efficiency and fiscal discipline within India's cooperative federal framework. Its effectiveness will ultimately depend on strengthening trust, transparency and fiscal capacity across all tiers of government.

SAMPLE QUESTION

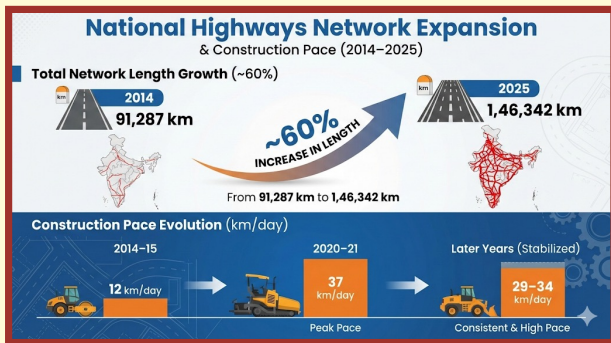
Q) The 16th Finance Commission has introduced States' contribution to GDP as a criterion for horizontal devolution. Analyse its rationale and possible impact on equity and efficiency.
(10 marks) (150 words)

YOJANA DECEMBER 2025: CHAMPIONS 2025

INDIA ON FAST TRACK

Bharatmala Pariyojana

- ➔ **Purpose:** Build a nationwide highway network that **cuts logistics costs**, speeds up freight movement, and improves **last-mile connectivity** to borders, ports, and economic hubs.
- ➔ **Scale & Progress (Phase-I)**
 - **Target:** 34,800 km of highways.
 - **Awarded:** 26,425 km; **Completed (mid-2025):** 20,770 km.
 - **Investment:** ~₹8.5 lakh crore.



➔ What It Builds

- **Economic corridors (8,737 km):** High-capacity routes linking production and consumption centres.
- **Expressways (2,422 km):** Access-controlled, high-speed travel for faster passenger and cargo movement.
- **Border & international roads (1,619 km):** Strategic connectivity for security and trade.
- **Port & coastal roads:** Seamless movement between ports and hinterland.

➔ Impact

- **Logistics cost:** Down from ~16% to ~10% of GDP, closer to global norms.
- **Efficiency & safety:** Shorter travel times, fewer bottlenecks, more reliable freight.
- Major beneficiary states: Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh.
- Signature assets boosting economy + security:
 - Atal Tunnel
 - Bogibeel Bridge
 - Maitri Setu
 - Sudarshan Setu
 - Sonamarg Tunnel

National Logistics Policy (2022)

- ➔ It aims to build a **technologically enabled, integrated, cost-efficient, resilient and sustainable logistics ecosystem** to reduce logistics costs and improve India's global logistics performance by 2030.
- ➔ The policy promotes **digital integration** of multiple transport and trade systems through platforms like the **Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP)** and **Ease of Logistics Services (E-Logs)**

Multi-Modal Logistics Parks (MMLPs)

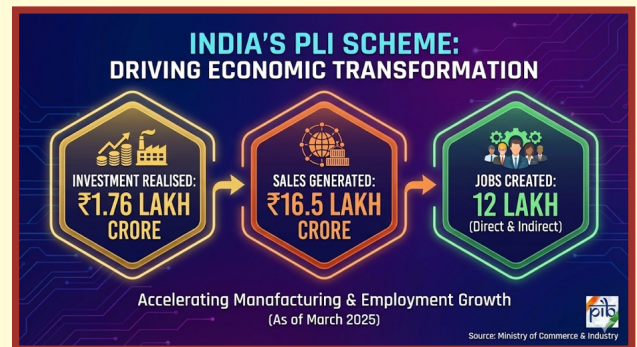
- ➔ A Multi-Modal Logistics Park (MMLP) is a large freight-handling facility with mechanised warehouses, specialised storage (e.g., cold storage), material-handling equipment and inter-modal transfer terminals that integrate rail, road and other transport modes for efficient cargo movement.
- ➔ Under Bharatmala, 35 MMLPs have been approved across key locations (e.g., Chennai, Nagpur, Indore, Bengaluru), with 5 expected to be operational by 2027.

INDIAN INDUSTRIES: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES



Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme (2020)

- ➔ A flagship initiative of the Government of India to boost domestic manufacturing and integrate India into global supply chains across 14 key sectors.
- ➔ Provides **financial incentives linked to incremental production and sales** in sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and drones.



EDUCATION FOR THE NEXT CENTURY

National Council for Vocational Education and Training

- ➔ India's national regulator for vocational education and training, established in 2018 to ensure quality and standardisation of skill programmes.
- ➔ Recognises and regulates awarding bodies and assessment agencies, and aligns qualifications with the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF).
- ➔ **Impact:** Improves credibility, uniform standards, and industry relevance of skill training, strengthening workforce employability.

Pradhan Mantri Skilling and Employability Transformation through Upgraded ITIs (PM-SETU)

- ➔ Launched on **4 October 2025** with an outlay of about **₹60,000 crore** to modernise **1,000 government Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)** using **hub-and-spoke model** (200 hub ITIs linked to 800 spokes) with advanced infrastructure and industry-aligned training.
- ➔ The scheme introduces **demand-driven courses and industry partnerships** through Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) to ensure curricula match job market needs and enhance placement support.



AYUSH INTEGRATION FOR HOLISTIC HEALTHCARE

AYUSH

- **AYUSH** stands for the traditional and non-conventional systems of healthcare including **Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa and Homoeopathy** practised in India.
- The **Ministry of Ayush** was formed on **9 November 2014** by the Government of India to develop and promote these traditional systems of medicine.

Desh Ka Prakriti Parikshan Abhiyan

- It is a **nationwide health-awareness campaign** launched by the **Ministry of Ayush** to help citizens identify their unique Ayurvedic *Prakriti* (mind-body constitution) and promote personalised, preventive health practices.
- It set multiple **Guinness World Records** for the most health pledges (in a week and a month) and the largest online photo and video participation campaigns.

Ayush Nivesh Saarthi portal

- A dedicated **investor facilitation digital platform** to provide a unified interface of policies, incentives and investment opportunities for domestic and global investment in the traditional medicine and wellness (AYUSH) sector.

Ayush Suraksha Portal

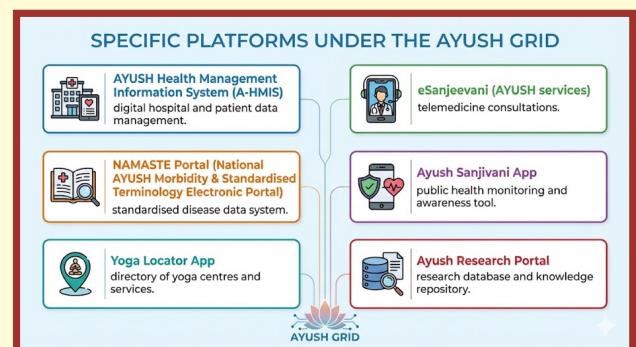
- An online platform launched by the **Ministry of AYUSH** in 2025 to enable citizens, healthcare professionals, and regulators to **report and monitor misleading advertisements and adverse drug reactions (ADRs)** related to AYUSH products and ensure real-time regulatory action and consumer safety.

Y-Break

- A five-minute **workplace yoga protocol** by the Ministry of AYUSH designed to help employees de-stress and re-focus during work.
- On the **iGOT Karmayogi Bharat platform**, it has been offered as a course under Mission Karmayogi and became a **top-performing module**.

Ayush Grid

- A national digital platform to integrate healthcare delivery, education, research, drug regulation, and citizen services across AYUSH systems through a unified IT backbone.



QUANTUM LEAP IN GLOBAL INNOVATION LANDSCAPE

LEADING THE INNOVATION CHARGE
INDIA RANKS 39
GLOBAL INNOVATION INDEX 2024

IMPROVED GLOBAL RANK:
India climbed from **81st** in 2015 to **39th** in 2024 among **133** economies

TOP PERFORMER:
India ranks **1st** among 38 lower-middle-income economies, maintaining its leadership

INNOVATION OUTPUT STRENGTH:
India excels in innovation outputs, ranking 33rd, an improvement from last year

Key Milestones of the Digital India Journey

- 2015** Digital India Program launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- 2016** Launch of Bharat Interface for Money App
- 2017** Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) was launched
- 2018** Prime Minister launched the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA)
- 2019** National Policy on Electronics was approved
- 2020** The Aarogya Setu app was launched
- 2021** The Prime Minister inaugurated the "UMANG International"
- 2022** Government of India launched the "National Language Translation Mission"
- 2023** G20 was hosted by India
- 2024** India hosted Global India AI Summit

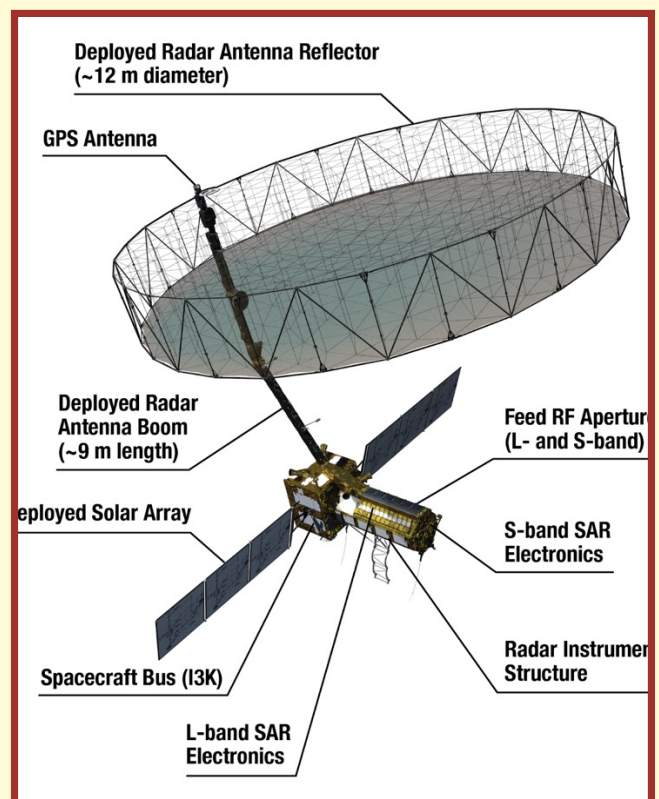
Source: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology

NISAR: SCIENCE FROM ORBIT, IMPACT ON EARTH

- ➔ **Mission & Partners:** NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar) is a collaborative Earth-observing mission between NASA and Indian Space Research Organisation.
- ➔ **Launch:** It was launched on **July 30, 2025** aboard **GSLV-F16** from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- ➔ **Orbit:** NISAR operates in a **polar Sun-synchronous orbit (~743 km altitude)**, enabling global coverage.
- ➔ **Twin Radars:** It carries **dual-frequency Synthetic Aperture Radars** — NASA's L-band and ISRO's S-band — to observe Earth's surface in greater detail.
- ➔ **Antenna:** The satellite has a **12-metre deployable mesh reflector antenna** — one of the largest ever flown — to focus radar signals.
- ➔ **Sweeps Earth Every 12 Days:** NISAR can image nearly the **entire land and ice surfaces of Earth every 12 days** with high resolution.
- ➔ **All-Weather, Day/Night Imaging:** Its radar can penetrate **clouds and darkness**, enabling continuous Earth monitoring.
- ➔ **Surface Change Detection:** It can detect **surface movements as small as a few centimeters**, useful for tracking earthquakes, landslides and glacial shifts.
- ➔ **Broad Applications:** Data will aid in understanding **climate change, vegetation, water resources, sea**

ice, and natural hazards.

- ➔ **Science & Research Impact:** The mission provides **freely accessible, high-resolution radar data** for scientists and decision-makers worldwide to monitor environmental changes and hazards



RISING GDP: CHARTING INDIA'S GROWTH STORY

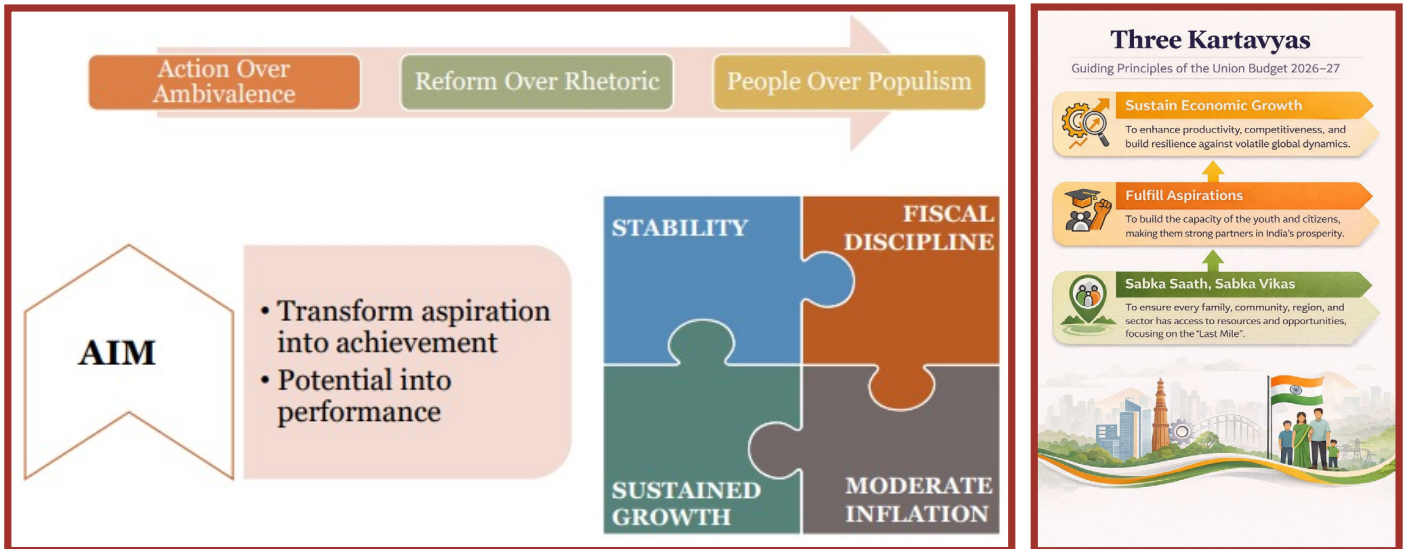
Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana

- ➔ It is the flagship **skill training and certification scheme** of the **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship** to help Indian youth gain industry-relevant skills and improve employability.
- ➔ Training is aligned with the **National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF)** and includes soft skills, entrepreneurship, financial and digital literacy components.
- ➔ Individuals with prior learning experience are assessed and certified under the **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** to align their competencies with industry standard
- ➔ The government **pays the training and assessment fees**, and training providers also help with **placement assistance** for certified candidates.

THE UNION BUDGET 2026-27

The **Union Budget 2026–27**, presented in the **Lok Sabha** by **Nirmala Sitharaman**, outlines the government’s **2027 roadmap** focused on **faster economic growth**, **higher investment**, **job creation**, and **self-reliance**. The key highlights emphasise **manufacturing expansion**, **MSME support**, **large-scale infrastructure spending**, **green development**, and **balanced regional growth**, while maintaining **fiscal discipline** and **macroeconomic stability**.

Viksit Bharat, balancing ambition with inclusion



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE BUDGET

- ➔ **Expenditure:** Total spending for 2026–27 is estimated at **₹53,47,315 crore**, a **7.7% increase** over 2025–26. **Interest payments** form **26% of total expenditure** and consume **40% of revenue receipts**.
- ➔ **Receipts:** Non-borrowing receipts are projected at **₹36,51,547 crore**, up **7.2%**. **Tax revenue** is expected to grow by **8%**.
- ➔ **GDP Growth:** Nominal GDP growth is estimated at **10%** (real growth + inflation).
- ➔ **Deficits:**
 - **Revenue deficit:** 1.5% of GDP (same as 2025–26).
 - **Fiscal deficit:** 4.3% of GDP (down from 4.4%).
- ➔ **Debt:** Outstanding liabilities are estimated at **55.6% of GDP**, with a target to reduce it to **around 50% by March 2031**.

POLICY HIGHLIGHTS

FINANCE & CAPITAL MARKETS

- ➔ A **High-Level Committee on Banking for Viksit Bharat** will be constituted to review and reform the banking ecosystem. The **Foreign Exchange Management (Non-debt Instruments) Rules** will be simplified to ease foreign investment flows.
- ➔ Individuals classified as **Persons Resident Outside India (PROI)** will be allowed to invest in listed Indian equities under the **Portfolio Investment Scheme**, with the investment cap raised from **5% to 10%**.
- ➔ To deepen bond markets, a **market-making framework** (including access to funds and derivatives on corporate bond indices) and **total return swaps on corporate bonds** are proposed. To boost municipal bond issuance, a **₹100 crore incentive** will be provided for any single issuance exceeding **₹1,000 crore**.

INDUSTRY & MSME DEVELOPMENT

- ➔ Two hundred legacy industrial clusters will be revived through technology upgrades and infrastructure modernisation.
- ➔ An integrated textile programme will be introduced with five components:
 - National Fibre Scheme
 - Textile Expansion and Employment Scheme
 - National Handloom and Handicraft Scheme
 - Tex-Eco Initiative
- Samarth 2.0
- ➔ To strengthen khadi and handicrafts, the **Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj initiative** will be launched.
- ➔ To create “Champion SMEs,” three major steps are proposed:
 - ₹10,000 crore SME Growth Fund
 - Additional funding for the Self-Reliant India Fund
 - Liquidity support measures

INFRASTRUCTURE PUSH

- ➔ Public capital expenditure will increase from **₹11.2 lakh crore to ₹12.2 lakh crore**. An **Infrastructure Risk Guarantee Fund** will be set up to enhance private sector confidence.
- ➔ Development initiatives include:
 - Five tourism destinations in Purvodaya states
 - Allocation of 4,000 electric buses to the region
- A dedicated freight corridor from **Surat to Dankuni**
- Operationalisation of 20 new national waterways within five years
- Schemes for construction equipment enhancement and container manufacturing

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

- ➔ City Economic Regions (CERs) will be identified based on growth drivers, with **₹5,000 crore per CER over five years**.
- ➔ Seven high-speed rail corridors will be developed between select cities.
 - o Mumbai-Pune, Pune-Hyderabad, Hyderabad-Bengaluru, Hyderabad-Chennai, Chennai-Bengaluru, Delhi-Varanasi

LABOUR & EMPLOYMENT

- ➔ A Standing Committee on *Education to Employment and Enterprise* will be established to strengthen service-sector development and assess the impact of artificial intelligence on jobs.

ENERGY & STRATEGIC MANUFACTURING

- ➔ The Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme outlay will rise from **₹22,919 crore to ₹40,000 crore**.
- ➔ Dedicated Rare Earth Corridors will be set up in **Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu**.
- ➔ ₹20,000 crore over five years will be allocated for **carbon capture, utilisation, and storage (CCUS)**.
- ➔ **Semiconductor Mission 2.0** will be launched to expand domestic chip manufacturing.

EDUCATION & CREATIVE ECONOMY

- ➔ Five university townships will be developed along industrial and logistics corridors.
- ➔ The Indian Institute of Creative Technologies, Mumbai will receive support to establish animation, visual effects, gaming, and comics labs in **15,000 secondary schools** and **500 colleges**.

HEALTH & MEDICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

- ➔ New Allied Health Professional institutions will be established across public and private sectors in fields such as radiology, anaesthesia, and behavioural health.
- ➔ To promote medical tourism, **five regional medical hubs** will be developed.
- ➔ Three new **All India Institute of Ayurveda** institutions will be established.

PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR

- ➔ The **Biopharma SHAKTI** scheme (Strategy for Healthcare Advancement through Knowledge, Technology, and Innovation) will run for five years with an outlay of **₹10,000 crore** to support biologics and biosimilars manufacturing.
- ➔ Three new **National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research** institutions will be set up, and seven existing ones will be upgraded.

TOURISM

- ➔ Setting up a National Institute of Hospitality as a bridge between academia, industry and the Government.
- ➔ Pilot scheme for upskilling 10,000 guides in 20 iconic tourist sites.
- ➔ National Destination Digital Knowledge Grid to digitally document all places of significance.
- ➔ To develop ecologically sustainable Mountain trails, Turtle Trails and Bird watching trails in select states
- ➔ India to host the first ever Global Big Cat Summit.
- ➔ Develop 15 archeological sites into vibrant, experiential cultural destinations.
- ➔ Development of Buddhist Circuits in the North East Region.

AGRICULTURE & ALLIED ACTIVITIES

- ➔ Tax deductions will be extended to cooperative members supplying cotton seeds and cattle feed.
- ➔ Animal husbandry will receive support through a **credit-linked subsidy programme**.
- ➔ A dedicated **coconut promotion scheme** will be implemented to increase production.

IMPORTANT TAX PROPOSALS IN THE FINANCE BILL

Personal Tax Structure	There is no change in income tax slabs for Assessment Year 2026–27. The existing structure continues.
Tax Incentives & Holidays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A tax holiday until 2047 is granted to foreign companies offering global cloud services through Indian data centres, subject to routing services via Indian resellers. • The tax holiday for units in the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) and Offshore Banking Units has been extended from 10 to 20 years, after which IFSC income will be taxed at 15%. • Non-residents supplying capital goods to electronics manufacturers receive a five-year income tax exemption, and certain expert non-residents get exemption on global income for up to five years.
Capital Market & Investment Taxation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All share buybacks will now be taxed as capital gains, along with an additional promoter-level levy. Effective rates: 22% for corporates and 30% for non-corporate promoters. • Securities Transaction Tax (STT) rates are increased across options and futures contracts. • No deduction will be allowed for interest expenses incurred to earn dividend or mutual fund income (earlier allowed up to 20%).

<p>Corporate Tax & MAT Changes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT) rate is reduced from 15% to 14%. However, no new MAT credit accumulation will be allowed from April 1, 2026. Existing credits can be adjusted only up to 25% of tax liability under the new regime. MAT exemption has also been expanded for more non-residents.
<p>Disclosure & Compliance Reforms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Foreign Assets Disclosure Scheme, 2026 has been introduced for small taxpayers (including returning NRIs), offering graded relief from penalty and prosecution upon payment of dues. Several tax offences have been decriminalised or capped with a maximum imprisonment of two years.
<p>Relief in TCS (Tax Collected at Source)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TCS on remittances above ₹10 lakh for education or medical purposes has been reduced from 5% to 2%. TCS on overseas tour packages has also been lowered to 2% (from earlier 5–20%).

FISCAL MATTERS

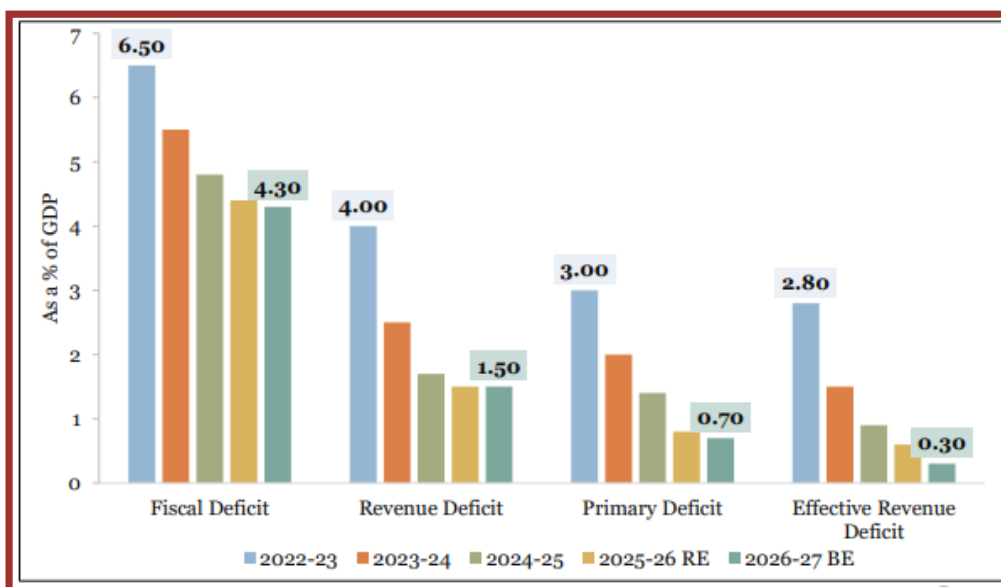
♣ 16th Finance Commission & Devolution

- The Union Government has accepted the recommendation of the 16th Finance Commission to **retain the vertical devolution share at 41%**, meaning 41% of the divisible tax pool will continue to be transferred to States.
- For FY 2026–27, **₹1.4 lakh crore** has been provided as Finance Commission Grants to States. These include allocations for **Rural Local Bodies, Urban Local Bodies, and Disaster Management**.

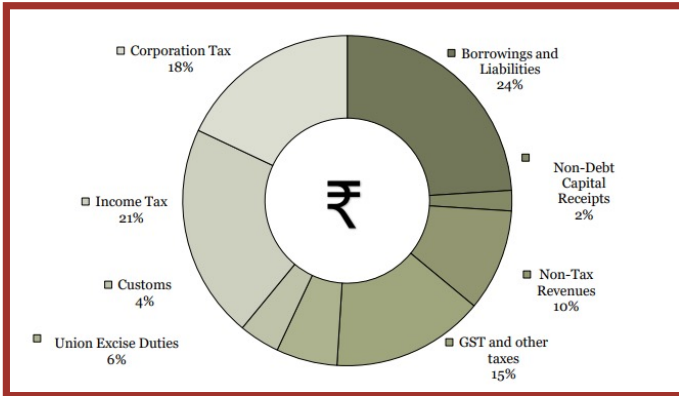
♣ Fiscal Consolidation Roadmap

- The Centre has reaffirmed its commitment to bring the **debt-to-GDP ratio down to 50±1% by 2030**.
- The debt ratio is projected at **55.6% of GDP in BE 2026–27**, improving from **56.1% in RE 2025–26**.
- The **fiscal deficit for RE 2025–26** remains at **4.4% of GDP**, unchanged from the Budget Estimate. In line with the new consolidation path, the **fiscal deficit for BE 2026–27** is targeted slightly lower at **4.3% of GDP**.
- This reflects gradual tightening, not shock therapy, but a calibrated glide toward debt sustainability.

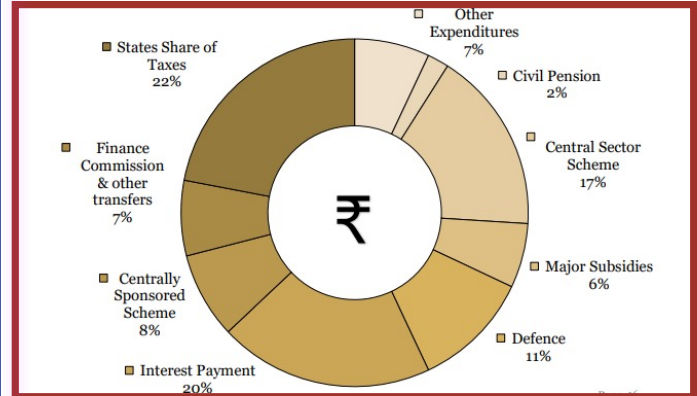
DEFICIT TREND



REVENUE



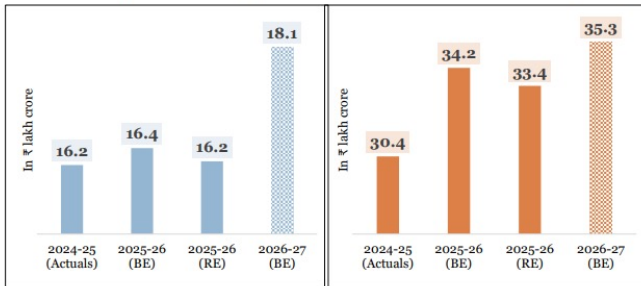
EXPENDITURE



RECEIPTS

Capital Receipts

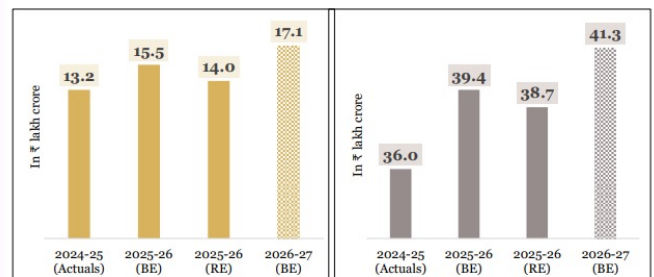
Revenue Receipts



EXPENDITURES

Effective Capital Expenditure

Revenue Expenditure



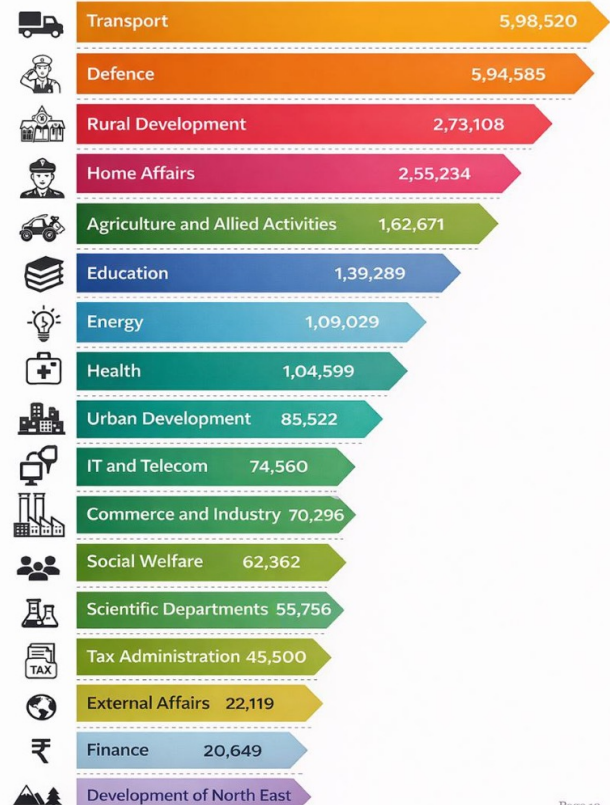
CONCLUSION

The Union Budget 2026–27 attempts a calibrated balance between fiscal discipline and an assertive drive toward high-technology manufacturing, infrastructure expansion, and inclusive welfare. It signals a long-term structural shift toward a productivity-led, innovation-driven economy aligned with the vision of *Viksit Bharat*.

Yet, the true test lies beyond allocations and announcements. Its success will depend on effective execution, the ability to convert capital expenditure into meaningful employment, and the revival of private consumption, particularly in rural and lower-income segments. Only if growth translates into broad-based income expansion and tangible opportunities at the grassroots will the momentum genuinely reach the “last mile.”

Expenditure of Major Items

In ₹ crore



WEEKLY DOSSIERS

BUDGET 2026 AND THE DECLINING ALLOCATION FOR ELECTRIC MOBILITY

Budgetary Contraction and Underutilisation Trends

The Union Budget 2026 reflects a notable reduction in allocations for major e-mobility schemes. The collective allocation declined by over ₹3,700 crore in 2025–26 Revised Estimates (RE) compared to Budget Estimates (BE). The PM Electric Drive Revolution in Innovative Vehicle Enhancement (PM E-DRIVE) scheme saw its allocation reduced from ₹4,000 crore (BE) to ₹1,300 crore (RE). Similarly, PM-eBus Sewa allocation fell sharply from ₹1,310 crore to ₹300 crore.

This follows underutilisation in 2024–25, where actual expenditure remained significantly below Revised Estimates, indicating implementation bottlenecks rather than purely fiscal tightening.

Reasons Behind the Decline

The reduction may be attributed to:

- ◆ Slow rollout of charging infrastructure and procurement delays.
- ◆ Gradual shift from subsidy-driven demand to market-

led EV growth.

- ◆ Fiscal consolidation pressures and reprioritisation of capital expenditure.
- ◆ Possible transition toward production-linked and manufacturing-focused incentives.

Thus, the decline may represent recalibration rather than policy abandonment.

Implications for India's Green Transition

- ◆ Lower allocations could slow EV adoption, affect urban bus electrification, and dampen investor sentiment in EV manufacturing. This may have implications for India's climate commitments, oil import reduction goals, and air quality improvement efforts.

Conclusion

- ◆ However, long-term success will depend less on short-term subsidies and more on structural reforms in infrastructure, financing, and domestic value-chain development. Budget numbers fluctuate. Structural transformation is the real test of commitment.

BUDGET 2026: RARE EARTH CORRIDORS AND INDIA'S STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

Growing Import Dependence and China's Dominance

India's rare earth imports have steadily risen from \$14.1 million in 2014 to \$17.5 million in 2024, with over 45% sourced from China. Rare earth elements (REEs), a group of 17 metals critical for EVs, wind turbines, defence systems, and electronics, are not truly "rare," but their processing is complex and environmentally intensive.

China dominates the sector by contributing over 60% of global production and nearly 92% of refining capacity, giving it overwhelming control over the value chain. This dominance has been strategically leveraged in global trade tensions.

Budget 2026 Proposal: Rare Earth Corridors

- ◆ In Union Budget 2026, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman proposed establishing rare earth corridors in mineral-rich States such as Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu.
- ◆ The corridors aim to promote integrated development mining, processing, research, and manufacturing, thereby strengthening domestic capabilities across the

value chain rather than limiting efforts to extraction alone.

Strategic Significance for India

Rare earths are critical for energy transition technologies, advanced electronics, and defence manufacturing. India's heavy dependence on China exposes vulnerabilities in supply chains, particularly amid geopolitical tensions.

Developing domestic corridors can:

- ◆ Enhance strategic autonomy
- ◆ Support clean energy targets
- ◆ Strengthen defence preparedness
- ◆ Boost high-tech manufacturing

Conclusion

- ◆ However, success will depend on investment in refining capacity, technological expertise, environmental safeguards, and long-term policy stability. The real contest in rare earths is not about who has the rocks in the ground. It's about who controls the chemistry labs, the separation technology, and the industrial ecosystem. In geopolitics, sometimes the smallest elements carry the heaviest consequences.

UNION BUDGET 2026: RECORD MENTIONS OF AI AND INDIA'S DIGITAL AMBITION

AI as a Central Policy Theme in Budget 2026

In the Union Budget 2026, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman mentioned “Artificial Intelligence” eleven times, the highest ever in an Indian budget speech. The references spanned governance, agriculture, healthcare, education, customs, employment matching, and professional upskilling.

Evolution of AI in Previous Budgets

The term was first introduced by Arun Jaitley in the 2018–19 Budget, primarily in the context of digital technologies and institutional programmes.

Subsequent budgets gradually expanded its scope:

- ◆ 2019–20: National AI programmes and portals.
- ◆ 2020–21: Integration into schemes like Ayushman Bharat.
- ◆ 2021–22: AI-driven compliance and governance tools.
- ◆ 2022–23: AI as a “sunrise opportunity.”
- ◆ 2023–24: Centres of Excellence and ecosystem development.

Budget 2026 reflects the maturation of this trajectory, from conceptual introduction to widespread deployment across sectors.

Strategic Significance

The repeated emphasis signals three strategic priorities:

- ◆ Transition to a knowledge-driven economy.
 - ◆ Workforce transformation through reskilling and AI literacy.
 - ◆ Leveraging AI for governance efficiency and inclusion.
- However, real impact will depend on digital infrastructure, data governance frameworks, ethical safeguards, and domestic research capability.

Conclusion

- ◆ AI is not merely a technology; it is a general-purpose infrastructure like electricity or the internet. Mentioning it eleven times is symbolic. Embedding it responsibly into institutions — that is the harder, longer experiment.

BEYOND VERDICTS: KEY JUDICIAL INTERVENTIONS

SUPREME COURT ALLOWS HIGH COURTS TO HEAR CONSUMER APPEALS

- ◆ The Supreme Court of India, invoking its powers under **Article 142 of the Constitution**, has permitted High Courts to hear consumer appeals in States and Union Territories where State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions have not been constituted or are non-functional due to low pendency.
- ◆ The Bench comprising Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Joymalya Bagchi directed that pending complaints and appeals be transferred to the jurisdictional High Courts, where a Single Judge will act as the Chairperson of the State Commission with assistance from technical members.
- ◆ The Court emphasised that litigants cannot be left without remedies and sought the assistance of the Solicitor General while allowing smaller States to propose alternative mechanisms where pendency is minimal, ensuring continued enforcement of the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

CHALLENGE TO DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT IN SUPREME COURT

- ◆ Digital news platform **The Reporters' Collective**, journalist **Nitin Sethi**, and the **National Campaign for Peoples' Right to Information** have approached the Supreme Court of India challenging key provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 and the 2025 Rules.
- ◆ The petitions contend that amendments introduced to **Section 8(1)(j) of the Right to Information Act, 2005** remove the earlier public interest balancing test and create a blanket exemption for disclosure of personal information, thereby weakening transparency and accountability. They also challenge provisions granting broad powers to the Central Government to call for data from intermediaries, alleging violations of Articles 14, 19, and 21, and raise concerns about the independence of the Data Protection Board. The petitioners have sought a declaration that several provisions of the Act and Rules are unconstitutional.

SUPREME COURT DECLINES PIL ON REHABILITATION OF DISABLED CHILDREN LEAVING CARE

- ◆ The Supreme Court of India dismissed a PIL filed by BAL MITRA seeking directions to create a structured rehabilitation and transition plan for children with disabilities who exit Child Care Institutions upon turning 18. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta refused to entertain the plea under **Article 32**.
- ◆ The petition argued that while thousands of such children reside in institutions, the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015** and the **Juvenile Justice Model Rules, 2016** lack a concrete transition framework, leaving them vulnerable after attaining majority. It sought comprehensive measures including trained staff, early intervention, and safeguards aligned with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, but the Court declined to proceed.

ALLAHABAD HIGH COURT FLAGS IMPACT OF MEDIA ON ADOLESCENTS

- ◆ In **Juvenile X vs. State of U.P. and Others** (2025), the Allahabad High Court expressed concern over the “disastrous” influence of television, the internet, and social media on adolescents, observing that such technologies are leading to a loss of innocence at a very young age and are largely beyond governmental control due to their pervasive nature.
- ◆ Justice Siddharth made these remarks while allowing a criminal revision filed by a juvenile who challenged orders of the Juvenile Justice Board and the POCSO Court, Kaushambi, which had directed that he be tried as an adult in a case involving an alleged consensual relationship with a minor girl.

KERALA HIGH COURT ORDERS IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME FOR DISABLED STUDENTS

- ◆ In **Martin Paul v. State of Kerala and Another** (2025), the Kerala High Court directed the State Government to strictly implement its 2015 policy providing monthly scholarships to eligible students with disabilities.
- ◆ A Division Bench comprising Chief Justice Nitin Jamdar and Justice S. Manu criticized the reluctance and apathy of ground-level officers in enforcing the scheme and ordered the State to take deterrent and punitive action against erring officials, including Secretaries of Local Self Government Institutions, to ensure effective compliance.

ETHICS - CASE STUDY

Q) Aravind is the District Magistrate of a predominantly rural district where the State government has recently mandated that all welfare benefits including pensions, scholarships, and food subsidies, be distributed only through a biometric authentication system linked to a digital identity platform. The reform aims to eliminate leakages, improve transparency, and ensure targeted delivery. However, several complaints emerge from remote villages. Elderly beneficiaries report authentication failures due to worn fingerprints. Tribal communities in forest areas face poor internet connectivity, leading to denial of rations. A local activist group alleges that the system, while technologically efficient, is excluding the most vulnerable sections of society. Meanwhile, the State government has instructed strict compliance with the digital system, warning officials against reverting to manual methods. Media coverage is intensifying, portraying the administration as insensitive to the poor. Aravind believes in technological reform but is also deeply concerned about fairness and inclusion. As the District Magistrate, he must decide how to balance administrative efficiency, legal compliance, and ethical responsibility toward vulnerable citizens.

Questions:

- a. Identify the key ethical issues involved in the case.
- b. What values are in conflict in this situation?
- c. What options are available to Aravind? Evaluate their merits and demerits.
- d. What course of action should he adopt? Justify your answer with ethical reasoning.

ETHICS - EXAMPLES

- 1. Consumer Ethics:** The Supreme Court reduced compensation in a case where a model claimed mental trauma, depression, and loss of career opportunities after ITC Salon allegedly trimmed 4 inches off her hair against her instructions. Her Rs 2 crore claim was cut to Rs 25 lakh, as the Court noted that damages must be based on reliable evidence, not mere photocopies or unverified documents.
- 2. Resilience:** Thanya Nathan C, a 24-year-old visually impaired lawyer from Kannur, Kerala, qualified the Kerala Judicial Service Examination, 2025, topping the merit list for candidates with benchmark disabilities and is set to become the first visually impaired civil court judge in the state. Overcoming limited access to law texts, she relied on screen-reading software and Braille, motivated by her family and a Supreme Court ruling supporting inclusive judicial recruitment.
- 3. Tolerance:** Deepak Kumar of Kotdwar, Uttarakhand, identified himself as “Mohammad Deepak” while confronting right-wing activists who were harassing 71-year-old shopkeeper Wakeel Ahmed over the name of his store, Baba School Dress and Matching Centre. Facing an FIR and harassment, his gym’s membership fell from 150 to 15–20, but he is receiving nationwide support from social media users.
- 4. Social Responsibility:** Dr Ravindra and Dr Smita Kolhe served Bairagarh in Maharashtra’s Melghat region for 35 years with a nominal Rs 2 consultation fee, reducing infant mortality from 200 to 40 per 1,000 births while addressing poverty and malnutrition, and were honoured with the Padma Shri.
- 5. Environmental Ethics:** IRS officer Rohit Mehra and his wife Geetanjali founded the School of Trees in Delhi’s Kidwai Nagar in 2025, teaching children environmental stewardship through hands-on activities like planting saplings and making seed balls. The initiative has planted around 250 trees and inspired sustainable habits and responsibility toward nature among urban children.
- 6. Civic Responsibility:** Japan ended its decade-long Cherry Blossom Festival at Arakurayama Sengen Park in Fujiyoshida in 2026 due to overtourism, which caused chronic traffic congestion, littering, and tourists trespassing or defecating in private gardens, despite the festival’s cultural and spiritual significance symbolising spring and renewal.
- 7. Human Rights Ethics:** Babubhai Prajapati, a former Ahmedabad police constable accused of a Rs. 20 bribe in 1996, was acquitted by the Gujarat High Court in February 2026, a day before he died of a heart attack. The case exposed extreme delays in the legal system, with charges framed in 2002, conviction in 2004, and a 22-year-long appeal.

MODEL ESSAY

"The quality, not the longevity, of one's life is what is important"

Introduction

- Quote by Martin Luther King, Jr.
- While modern science, medicine and improved living conditions have extended human lifespan, **mere longevity without meaning or well-being is an empty pursuit.**

Concept of Quality vs. Longevity

- Longevity refers to the number of years a person lives. Eg: Japan and Switzerland have high life expectancy (>83 years) due to healthcare and nutrition.
- Quality of life refers to well-being, satisfaction, happiness and meaningful existence, including mental, emotional, social and physical health.

Factors of Quality of Life

- **Health** – Physical and mental well-being. Eg: **Fit India Movement (2019)** promoted exercise and healthy lifestyle to reduce lifestyle diseases.
- **Relationships** – Family, friends, and community ties. Eg: **Kerala elderly care programs** show joint family/community support reduces loneliness.
- **Purpose** – Meaningful engagement. Eg: **Teach for India volunteers** improve education for underprivileged children gaining fulfillment.
- **Security** – Financial and environmental safety. Eg: **PM Jan Dhan Yojana (2014)** gave financial security; Delhi's pollution control improved health.
- **Fulfillment** – Ethical living and social contribution. Eg: **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan** and blood donation drives

Challenges

- **Social Isolation:** 1 in 3 adults over 50 globally face loneliness.
- **Work Stress & Financial Pressure:** 42% of urban Indians report high occupational stress.
- **Lack of Purpose & Engagement:** Retirees

without hobbies report lower happiness; purposeful living reduces mortality risk by ~20%.

- **Environmental Degradation:** Air pollution in India reduces life expectancy by ~5–7.6 years in polluted areas.
- **Ethical & Cultural Gaps:** Consumerist lifestyles reduce empathy, community bonding, and life satisfaction.

Way Forward

- **Promote Social & Community Engagement:** Senior clubs, volunteer programs, intergenerational activities.
- **Work-Life Balance & Mental Well-Being:** Flexible work hours, stress management, mindfulness.
- **Purposeful Living & Lifelong Learning:** Hobbies, creative work, skill development, mentoring.
- **Environmental Reforms:** Green spaces, pollution control, safe urban planning.
- **Policy Metrics Beyond Longevity:** Healthy Life Expectancy, Life Satisfaction Index, Bhutan's Gross National Happiness model.

Conclusion

- **Longevity without quality is like an unlit lamp - present but not truly alive. Quality enriches life,** making it worth living, respectful and fulfilling.
- While modern progress has extended lifespan, **the true measure of life is in joy, health, purpose, relationships and inner well-being.**

Sample Quotes

- *For success, attitude is equally as important as ability - Walter Scott*
- *Correction does much, but encouragement does more - Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*
- *No legacy is so rich as honesty - William Shakespeare*

MAINS JOT DOWN



GS I: ART AND CULTURE

- ➔ Researchers have identified Tamil **Brahmi inscriptions** in the **Valley of the Kings** in Egypt dating from the 1st–3rd centuries CE, highlighting ancient trade links between South India and Egypt. The inscriptions mention Tamil trader names such as Cikai Korran, Kopan, Catan and Kiran. The term “**Korran**” also appears in Sangam literature as a title used for a Chera ruler.
- ➔ **Tamil Brahmi** was a regional variant of the Brahmi script used to write early Tamil inscriptions between 300 BCE and 100 CE and is associated with the Sangam period, during which works like the Thirukkural were composed.



GS III: DEFENCE

- ➔ India has assumed the first-ever command of **CTF-154**, the maritime security training task force under the **Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)**.
- ➔ The CMF is a 47-nation voluntary maritime coalition that works to uphold the International Rules-Based Order by countering illicit non-state actors and ensuring maritime security and the free flow of global commerce.
- ➔ It operates through five task forces, including CTF-150 (maritime security outside the Arabian Gulf), CTF-151 (counter-piracy), CTF-152 (security inside the Arabian Gulf), CTF-153 (Red Sea security), and CTF-154 (maritime security training). India’s leadership of CTF-154 reflects its expanding role in regional maritime cooperation.



GS II: GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

- ➔ Data placed in the Lok Sabha shows that less than half of the candidates trained under the **PM-DAKSH** scheme between 2021 and 2024 secured placements. Under the scheme’s guidelines, training institutes are required to ensure employment for at least 70% of trainees in Short-Term Training Courses, failing which they must forfeit 30% of the training cost per candidate.
- ➔ **PM-DAKSH (Pradhan Mantri Dakshta Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi)**, launched in 2020–21, is a Central Sector Scheme aimed at providing free skill development through quality institutions to enhance employability. It targets vulnerable groups including SCs, OBCs, Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), De-notified Tribes, Safai Karamcharis (including waste pickers), and transgender persons.



GS III: BIODIVERSITY

- ➔ The **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS)** is set to launch a suite of mobile-based applications aimed at enhancing marine livelihoods and coastal resilience.
- ➔ These include the **Jellyfish Aggregation Information Interactive Portal (JellyAIIP)** to provide timely information on jellyfish concentrations, the **Swell-Surge Inundation Vulnerability Advisory System (SIVAS)** for forecasting coastal flooding risks, and an upgraded SAMUDRA app that will offer more precise potential fishing zone advisories. Together, these tools are designed to support safer navigation, improve fish catch efficiency, and strengthen early warning systems for coastal communities.



GS III: CYBER SECURITY

- The Union Home Minister launched the **S4C** dashboard under the **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)**, functioning under the Ministry of Home Affairs. Approved in 2018 and dedicated to the nation in 2020, I4C serves as the nodal agency to combat cybercrime in a coordinated manner, with a special focus on crimes against women and children, capacity building of law enforcement, and public awareness.



GS III: SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), in collaboration with the All India Society for Electronics and Computer Technology (AISECT), has launched **Kaushal Rath** under the “**Yuva AI for All**” programme. Kaushal Rath is a mobile Artificial Intelligence awareness initiative aimed at democratising AI education at scale.
- “Yuva AI for All” is a free 4.5-hour self-paced national course designed to make AI accessible and understandable to every Indian. It is available on platforms such as FutureSkills Prime and iGOT Karmayogi, and forms part of the broader IndiaAI Mission.

- Azista Space has successfully demonstrated “in-orbit snooping” or “space watch” by capturing images of the International Space Station, showcasing India’s growing capabilities in space monitoring.

- This development enhances India’s Space Situational Awareness (SSA), which refers to the systematic tracking, monitoring, and prediction of man-made satellites, space debris, and natural celestial objects in Earth’s orbit. SSA plays a critical role in ensuring the safety and sustainability of space operations by identifying potential collision threats and facilitating timely avoidance measures.

- A recent study has identified a gentler technique to recover lab-grown T-cells without causing cellular damage, potentially improving the efficiency of advanced immunotherapies.

- T-cells are a type of white blood cell that detect infections and abnormal cells such as cancer. They either directly destroy diseased cells or activate other immune cells, making them central to modern immunotherapy.



GS I: GEOGRAPHY

- Recent research suggests that desert winds from the west and northwest of India may help predict “**monsoon break**” periods.

- A monsoon break refers to a temporary pause in rainfall during the southwest monsoon, when rains stop for a week or more after a few active days. Such dry spells are common during the rainy season.

- In northern India, breaks occur when rain-bearing systems become infrequent along the monsoon trough or the **Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone (ITCZ)**, or when the monsoon trough shifts northwards towards the Himalayas, causing dry conditions over the plains. Along the west coast, dry spells are typically associated with winds blowing parallel to the coastline, reducing rainfall activity.

- Researchers at Stanford University have developed the first global map of rare continental mantle earthquakes.

- Unlike most earthquakes that originate in the Earth’s crust at depths of about 10–29 km, mantle earthquakes occur much deeper, often more than 80 km below the Mohorovičić discontinuity (Moho), the boundary separating the crust from the warm, semi-solid mantle beneath. These deep quakes generally do not produce significant surface shaking, but they provide valuable insights into the internal structure of the Earth and offer a new window into understanding earthquake mechanisms deep within the planet.

CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK

SAASPOCALYPSE

- A sharp global sell-off in SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) stocks, triggered by fears that advanced AI tools like Claude from Anthropic could automate enterprise software functions, reducing demand for traditional subscription-based business software.

RICIN

- A highly toxic protein derived from the castor plant (*Ricinus communis*) that disables ribosomes, stopping protein synthesis and causing organ failure. There is no specific antidote; treatment is supportive. The probe into a suspected ricin-linked bioterror plot was taken over by the National Investigation Agency.

DABBA TRADING

- An illegal form of securities trading conducted outside recognised stock exchanges, where transactions are privately recorded by operators, bypassing regulatory oversight by bodies like the Securities and Exchange Board of India and the National Stock Exchange.

PLASTIC ICE (ICE VII)

- An exotic high-pressure phase of water where molecules form a solid lattice but retain rotational motion. It likely exists deep inside icy planets and moons under extreme pressure.

SAYONARA TAX

- Japan's international departure tax of ¥1,000 introduced in 2019, charged to travellers leaving by air or sea to fund tourism infrastructure; it is set to rise to ¥3,000 from July 2026.