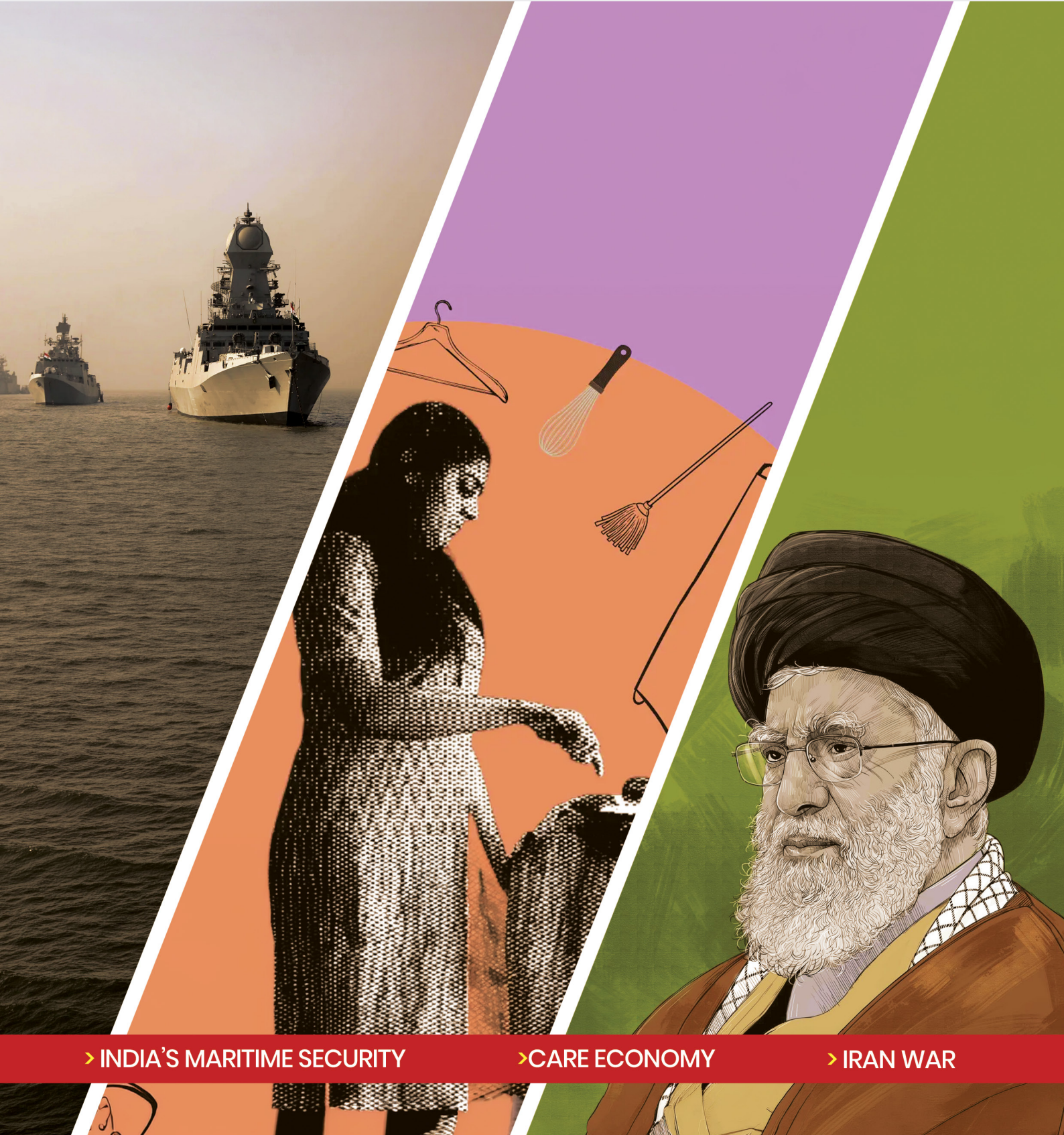


FWD

FORTUNE WEEKLY DIGEST



> INDIA'S MARITIME SECURITY

> CARE ECONOMY

> IRAN WAR

02nd MARCH, 2025 - 08th MARCH, 2026

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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

KASTURI SHA
AIR 68

MANJIMA P
AIR 235

FABI RASHEED
AIR 71

SWATHI S BABU
AIR 522

OORMILA J S
AIR 561

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

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CARE ECONOMY

Syllabus: GS III - Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

PYQ MAPPING

Q) Distinguish between 'care economy' and 'monetized economy'. How can care economy be brought into a monetized economy through women empowerment? (2023)

WHY IN NEWS

An article titled *"Recognising Invisible Labour of Care is a National Priority"* by Annpurna Devi, Union Minister for Women and Child Development, published in The Indian Express, highlights the need to acknowledge and support unpaid care work as a critical pillar of India's economy and social welfare system.

INTRODUCTION

The care economy refers to the system of paid and unpaid activities involved in caring for children, the elderly, the sick, and households, which sustains human well-being and social reproduction. Though often invisible in economic statistics, it forms the foundation that enables societies and economies to function effectively.

SHORT TAKES

➤ **Satellite account:**

- A supplementary framework linked to the main national accounts that provides detailed data on a specific sector or activity of the economy without altering the core accounts.
- It helps measure areas that are not fully captured in GDP such as tourism, environment, or unpaid household and care work.

WHAT IS CARE ECONOMY?

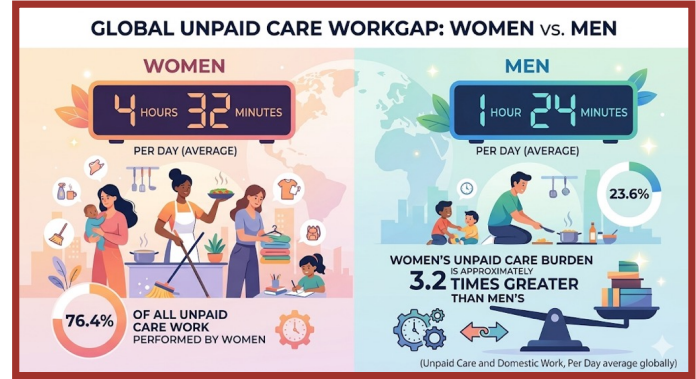


- ☞ The care economy includes all **paid and unpaid activities that provide care for people**, such as childcare, eldercare, healthcare, and domestic work.
- ☞ Paid care work includes **nurses, teachers, childcare workers, and domestic workers**, while unpaid work includes **cooking, cleaning, caregiving, and household management** performed within families.
- ☞ Care work supports people at all stages including **infants, children, adults with disabilities, and elderly populations**.
- ☞ Much of care work occurs outside markets and therefore **is not counted in GDP**, despite its large economic value.
- ☞ Globally and in India, **women perform the majority of unpaid care work**, reflecting entrenched social norms.

IMPORTANCE

- ➔ **Foundation of human capital formation:** Care work ensures **nutrition, health, education, and emotional development**, which are critical for productive societies.
- ➔ **Enables women's participation in the workforce:** Accessible and affordable care services reduce the burden of unpaid care work, enabling more women to **enter and remain in the labour market**.
- ➔ **Significant employment potential:** Expanding care services can generate **millions of jobs in healthcare, childcare, and social services**.
- ➔ **Enhances social welfare and quality of life:** Strong care systems improve **public health, educational outcomes, and social cohesion**.
- ➔ **Supports ageing societies:** With rising life expectancy and declining fertility, the demand for **eldercare services** is increasing globally.

GLOBAL STATISTICS

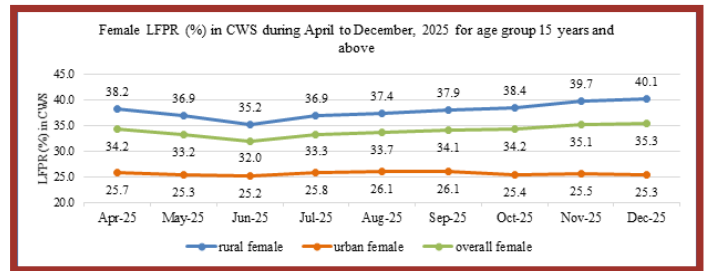


STATUS IN INDIA

- Significant time spent on unpaid caregiving:** According to the **Time Use Survey 2024** by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation**, Indians who performed unpaid caregiving spent **about 116 minutes daily** on such activities.
- Large gender gap in caregiving time:** Women spend **about 137 minutes per day on unpaid caregiving**, while men spend around **75 minutes**.
- Rising unpaid care burden among young women:** Females aged **15–29** spent around **164 minutes daily on caregiving in 2024**, compared to **154 minutes in 2019**, indicating increasing care responsibilities.
- Low female labour force participation:** According to

the **Periodic Labour Force Survey**, the female labour force participation rate is **around 35.3% for women aged 15 years and above**.

- Economic value of unpaid work:** Unpaid care work in India is estimated to be worth **15–17% of GDP** if monetised



CHALLENGES

- Informal nature of care employment:** Domestic workers, caregivers, and community health workers often **lack job security, labour protection, and social security benefits**.
- Gendered division of labour:** Social norms assign caregiving responsibilities mainly to women, resulting in **unequal distribution of domestic work**.
- Lack of recognition in national accounting:** Unpaid care work remains **invisible in GDP calculations and economic planning**.
- Time poverty among women:** Excessive unpaid work reduces women's **time available for education, skill development, and employment**.

- Inadequate care infrastructure:** India has **insufficient childcare centres, eldercare facilities, and community health services**.
- Limited public investment in care services:** Public expenditure on care infrastructure remains **very low relative to demand**.
- Demographic transition:** Increasing **ageing population and urbanisation** will significantly raise demand for care services.
- Cultural barriers to redistribution of care work:** Traditional gender norms discourage **men's participation in household care responsibilities**.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

- Caregiver Skilling Initiative (Budget 2026-27):** A strategic plan to train 1.5 lakh multi-skilled caregivers in geriatric care, core medical support, and allied skills under the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF).
- National Health Mission (NHM):** Community health workers such as **ASHA workers deliver healthcare and caregiving services at the grassroots level**.

- Legal and labour reforms:** Labour laws such as the **Code on Social Security** and the **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code** promote **crèche facilities and worker welfare**.
- Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM):** A voluntary and contributory pension scheme ensuring social security and an assured monthly pension (after age 60) to unorganized sector workers.

- 🌀 **e-Shram Portal:** Registers informal workers, including domestic workers and caregivers, to extend **social security benefits**.
- 🌀 **Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007:** Establishes a legal framework making it a statutory obligation for children and heirs to provide maintenance to senior citizens.

- 🌀 **Maternity Benefit Act (Amendment), 2017:** Extended **paid maternity leave to 26 weeks**, supporting childcare responsibilities.
- 🌀 **Central Civil Services (Leave) Rules, 1972:** Male central government employees are entitled to 15 days of paid paternity leave for childbirth or adoption of a child below one year.

CASE STUDIES

♣️ Japan:

- o **Kaigoryugaku Scheme** allows foreign students studying caregiving to change their student visa to a **“care worker” residence status** after completing a two-year care training programme.
- o The scheme helps address Japan’s growing shortage of elder-care workers amid its rapidly ageing population.

♣️ United Kingdom

- o **Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills (OFSTED)** is the UK government regulator that inspects and monitors schools, early-years childcare providers, and children’s social care institutions.
- o Through a four-point rating system—**Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement, and Inadequate**—it ensures quality standards and accountability in childcare and social care services, strengthening the formal care economy.

♣️ Sweden

- o Sweden’s parental leave system, introduced in **1995** and administered by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency, grants **480 days of paid parental leave per child**, with **90 non-transferable days for each parent** and compensation of about **80% of wages for most of the leave period**.
- o This has significantly increased paternal participation, with about 77% of fathers of children born after 1995 using parental leave before the child turned four.

♣️ India:

- o Vedanta Limited introduced a **Parenthood Policy in 2024** that allows women to take up to **12 months of sabbatical leave after childbirth with job security**, along with options for work-from-home or flexible working hours from four weeks before delivery until the child turns two.
- o The policy extends benefits to **single parents and LGBTQIA+ employees**, offering **12 weeks of caregiver leave for adoption or commissioning**.

WAY FORWARD

- ✳️ **Recognise unpaid care work in economic policy:** Integrate care work in **satellite accounts and national statistics**.
- ✳️ **Expand childcare and eldercare infrastructure:** Establish **universal childcare centres, community eldercare services, and assisted living facilities**.
- ✳️ **Increase public investment in the care economy:** Treat care services as **critical social and economic infrastructure**.
- ✳️ **Promote equal sharing of care responsibilities:** Encourage men’s participation in household work through social campaigns and policy incentives.
- ✳️ **Formalise care work:** Provide **minimum wages, labour rights, and social security for domestic and care workers**.
- ✳️ **Improve working conditions for frontline caregivers:** Strengthen remuneration and welfare for Anganwadi



workers, ASHA workers, and domestic workers.

- o **Example:** Inclusion of **ASHA and Anganwadi workers in the Ayushman Bharat** scheme provides them with free health insurance coverage.

* **Support women's labour force participation:** Provide

flexible work arrangements, parental leave policies, and workplace childcare facilities.

* **Skill development in care sectors:** Develop training programmes for professional caregivers, nurses, and childcare workers.

CONCLUSION

Strengthening the care economy through recognition, investment, and supportive policies is essential for promoting gender equality and inclusive growth. Building a robust care ecosystem will be crucial for achieving sustainable development and the vision of a **women-led Viksit Bharat**.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Discuss the significance of the care economy in India's development trajectory. What are the key challenges in strengthening this sector?

(10 marks) (150 words)

INDIA'S MARITIME SECURITY

Syllabus: GS III - Security challenges and their management in border areas

PYQ MAPPING

Q) Project 'Mausam' is considered a unique foreign policy initiative of the Indian government to improve relationships with its neighbours. Does the project have a strategic dimension? Discuss. (2015)

Q) With respect to the South China sea, maritime territorial disputes and rising tension affirm the need for safeguarding maritime security to ensure freedom of navigation and overflight throughout the region. In this context, discuss the bilateral issues between India and China. (2014)

WHY IN NEWS

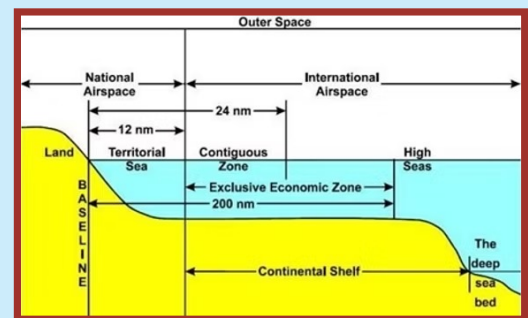
India's Ministry of Defence **signed contracts worth ₹5,083 crore** with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited for six Advanced Light Helicopter Mk-III for the Indian Coast Guard and Shtil surface-to-air missile system for the Indian Navy to strengthen maritime security capabilities.

INTRODUCTION

India's maritime security is vital for safeguarding its extensive coastline, island territories, and vast maritime interests in the Indian Ocean region. With nearly **90–95% of its trade by volume** and **about 80% of its energy imports** transported through sea routes, ensuring secure maritime domains is crucial for national security and economic stability.

SHORT TAKES

- **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):** A maritime zone extending up to **200 nautical miles (about 370 km)** from a country's coast, within which the coastal state has **exclusive** rights to explore, exploit, conserve, and manage natural resources such as fish, oil, gas, and seabed minerals.



STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF MARITIME DOMAIN FOR INDIA

- **Long Coastline and Island Territories:** India has a coastline of about **7,516 km** and more than **1,300 islands** including the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep groups, making maritime security essential for territorial integrity.
- **Dependence on Sea-borne Trade:** Nearly **90–95% of India's trade by volume** and **about 70% by value** is carried through maritime routes, making secure sea lanes vital for economic stability.
- **Energy Security:** Around **80% of India's crude oil imports** pass through the Indian Ocean and key chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz and Malacca Strait.
- **Strategic Location in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR):** India sits close to major global shipping routes connecting **Europe, Africa, and East Asia**, giving it a strategic role in safeguarding Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs).
- **Blue Economy Potential:** The maritime domain supports fisheries, offshore energy, seabed minerals, and coastal tourism, which are central to India's **Blue Economy strategy**.

KEY INDIAN NAVY PLATFORMS

Category	Class	Description	Examples
Aircraft Carrier	Vikrant-class aircraft carrier	India's first indigenously built aircraft carrier designed for carrier battle group operations and blue-water capability	INS Vikrant
Aircraft Carrier	Kiev-class aircraft carrier	Modified Russian carrier serving as India's primary operational carrier with naval fighter operations	INS Vikramaditya

Destroyer	Visakhapatnam-class destroyer	Next-generation stealth guided-missile destroyers with improved sensors and long-range strike capability	INS Visakhapatnam, INS Mormugao, INS Imphal
Destroyer	Kolkata-class destroyer	Indigenous stealth destroyers forming a core component of India's surface strike fleet	INS Kolkata, INS Kochi, INS Chennai
Frigate	Nilgiri-class frigate	Advanced stealth frigates with enhanced automation and network-centric warfare capabilities	INS Nilgiri, INS Udaygiri
Frigate	Shivalik-class frigate	India's first indigenously designed stealth multi-role frigates used for escort and maritime security	INS Shivalik, INS Satpura, INS Sahyadri
Frigate	Talwar-class frigate	Russian-origin stealth guided-missile frigates equipped with long-range strike missiles	INS Talwar, INS Trishul, INS Tabar, INS Teg
Corvette	Kamorta-class corvette	Anti-submarine warfare corvettes designed to detect and neutralise enemy submarines	INS Kamorta, INS Kadmat, INS Kiltan
Submarine	Arihant-class submarine	Nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines forming the sea-based leg of India's nuclear triad	INS Arihant, INS Arighat
Submarine	Kalvari-class submarine	Modern diesel-electric attack submarines built in India under Project-75	INS Kalvari, INS Khanderi, INS Karanj, INS Vela, INS Vagir

INDIA'S MARITIME SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

- 🇮🇳 **Multi-layered Security Structure:** India follows a **three-tier coastal security system** involving
 - o **Indian Navy (Outer Layer):** Ensures overall maritime security and surveillance in the outer maritime zones, including the **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**, and coordinates the entire coastal security framework.
 - o **Indian Coast Guard (Intermediate Layer):** Conducts patrolling, surveillance, and law-enforcement operations in territorial waters and the **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)**.
 - o **Coastal Police (Near-shore Layer):** Patrol shallow coastal waters, harbours, and areas close to the coastline to prevent infiltration, smuggling, and other local threats.
- 🇮🇳 **Coastal Surveillance Network (CSN):** A network of **radar stations, (Automatic Identification System) systems, and sensors** along the coastline tracks maritime traffic and suspicious vessels.
- 🇮🇳 **Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC):** IMAC in Gurugram acts as the **nodal centre for Maritime Domain Awareness**, integrating data from radars, ships, satellites, and partner countries.
- 🇮🇳 **National Command Control Communication and Intelligence Network (NC3I):** A network integrating **51 naval and coast guard stations** to provide a real-time maritime operational picture.
- 🇮🇳 **Joint Operations Centres (JOCs):** Located in major naval commands to coordinate operations among Navy, Coast Guard, intelligence agencies, and coastal police.

MAJOR THREATS

- ⚡ **Maritime Terrorism:** Terrorist groups may use maritime routes for infiltration, arms trafficking, and attacks on ports or coastal infrastructure.
 - o **Example:** In the 2008 Mumbai attacks, ten Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists hijacked the trawler *Kuber* and infiltrated Mumbai by sea.
- ⚡ **Piracy:** Piracy in the **western Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden** threatens commercial shipping and energy supplies.
- ⚡ **Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated (IUU) Fishing:** Foreign fishing vessels exploit India's Exclusive Economic Zone, affecting marine resources and coastal livelihoods.
- ⚡ **Smuggling and Trafficking:** Maritime routes are used for **drug trafficking, arms smuggling, and human trafficking**.
 - o **Example:** In **Operation Samudragupt (2023)**, the Narcotics Control Bureau and the Indian Navy intercepted a "mother ship" off the Kerala coast and seized about **2,500 kg of the illegal drug methamphetamine**
- ⚡ **Strategic Rivalries in the Indian Ocean:** Increased

naval presence of external powers, especially China, raises concerns regarding **strategic encirclement and surveillance**.

- 🔥 **Environmental and Non-traditional Threats:** Oil spills, marine pollution, and natural disasters also affect maritime security and coastal communities.

GAPS IN INDIA'S MARITIME SECURITY

- 🌀 **Surveillance Gaps:** Despite radar chains, achieving **complete monitoring of the vast coastline and EEZ remains difficult**.
- 🌀 **Coordination Challenges:** Multiple agencies (Navy, Coast Guard, Marine Police, intelligence agencies) can lead to **overlapping responsibilities and coordination issues**.
- 🌀 **Weak Marine Police:** Coastal police forces often lack **training, boats, and modern communication equipment**.

MARITIME PARTNERSHIPS OF INDIA

- ♣️ **QUAD Maritime Cooperation:** India collaborates with the **US, Japan, and Australa** under the Quad to enhance maritime domain awareness and ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific.
- ♣️ **Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement (AIKEYME):** A multilateral naval exercise with several African countries to enhance interoperability and maritime security cooperation.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

- ☀️ **Maritime Vision 2030:** India's Maritime Vision 2030 outlines a ten-year strategy to develop ports, shipping, and inland waterways to boost economic growth and employment.
- ☀️ **SAGAR Vision:** India's maritime policy **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)** promotes cooperative security and regional stability.
- ☀️ **Strengthening Coastal Surveillance Network:** Expansion of radar stations under **Phase II**, increasing coverage to about **84 radar stations** along the coast.
- ☀️ **Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA):** Integration of radar, AIS, satellite data, and intelligence through

- o **Example:** In December 2023, flooding after Cyclone Michaung caused crude oil from Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited to spill into the Kosasthalaiyar River and Ennore Creek, spreading into the Bay of Bengal.

- 🌀 **Limited Aerial Surveillance:** There are **insufficient maritime patrol aircraft and UAVs** to monitor the entire EEZ effectively.
- 🌀 **Inadequate Community Integration:** Fishermen, who can act as the "eyes and ears" of maritime security, are still **not fully integrated into intelligence networks**.
- 🌀 **Continental Strategic Mindset:** Historically India has been **land-centric**, resulting in lower prioritisation of maritime security compared to land borders.
- ♣️ **Malabar Naval Exercise:** A major multilateral naval exercise involving India, the United States, Japan, and Australia focusing on interoperability and advanced maritime operations.
- ♣️ **Bilateral Naval Exercises:** India conducts regular maritime exercises with countries such as the United Kingdom (Exercise Konkan), France (Exercise Varuna), and Singapore (SIMBEX).

IMAC to monitor maritime activity.

- ☀️ **Coastal Security Exercises:** Regular exercises like **Sagar Kavach** test inter-agency preparedness against maritime threats.
- ☀️ **Modernisation of Naval and Coast Guard Assets:** Induction of new patrol vessels, anti-submarine ships, and surveillance aircraft to enhance maritime capability.
- ☀️ **Community Interaction Programmes:** Navy and Coast Guard engage fishing communities to act as **informal intelligence sources along the coast**

WAY FORWARD

- ✦ **Strengthening Maritime Domain Awareness:** Use of **satellites, AI-based analytics, drones, and integrated sensor networks** for real-time surveillance.
- ✦ **Capacity Building of Marine Police:** Improve training, equipment, and coordination between state marine police and central agencies.
- ✦ **Expanding Naval and Coast Guard Capabilities:** Increase the number of patrol vessels, submarines, and long-range maritime patrol aircraft.
- ✦ **Enhancing Regional Cooperation:** Strengthen information sharing with Indian Ocean countries and regional organisations.

- * **Securing Critical Maritime Infrastructure:** Improve security at ports, offshore installations, and coastal energy infrastructure.
- * **Promoting Blue Economy with Security:** Balance economic use of oceans with strong maritime governance and environmental protection.

CONCLUSION

Strengthening maritime security requires robust surveillance, inter-agency coordination, and deeper regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean. A comprehensive approach integrating technology, naval capability, and partnerships will enable India to safeguard its maritime interests while promoting stability and prosperity in the region.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) Discuss the strategic importance of the maritime domain for India's national security and economic development. **(10 marks) (150 words)**

IRAN WAR

Syllabus: GS III - International relations

PYQ MAPPING

Q) In what ways would the ongoing US-Iran Nuclear Pact Controversy affect the national interest of India? How should India respond to this situation? (2018)

WHY IN NEWS

Tensions in **West Asia** have escalated after a major **U.S.–Israel military strike on Iran on February 28, 2026**, which reportedly killed Iran’s Supreme Leader **Ali Khamenei**. The conflict has triggered retaliatory attacks across the region, including strikes on U.S. bases and Gulf infrastructure.

INTRODUCTION

The conflict between the United **States, Israel, and Iran** represents one of the most serious crises in West Asia in recent decades. Rooted in disputes over Iran’s nuclear program, regional power rivalries, and long-standing political hostility since the **Iranian Revolution**, the crisis has evolved into a broader geopolitical confrontation. The war has significant implications for global energy markets, international law, regional security, and the strategic interests of major powers.



TIMELINE OF THE U.S.–ISRAEL–IRAN CONFLICT

- **1957 – Start of Iran’s Nuclear Program:** Iran began its nuclear programme with international cooperation.
- **Late 1980s – Nuclear Weapons Ambition:** During the Iran–Iraq War, Iran decided to pursue nuclear weapons for security.
- **2002 – Secret Nuclear Sites Exposed:** Iranian dissident group revealed secret nuclear facilities, triggering international concern.
- **2006 – UN Sanctions Begin:** The United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1696 demanding Iran suspend uranium enrichment.
- **2015 – Nuclear Deal (JCPOA):** Iran and the P5+1 countries signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action restricting Iran’s nuclear activities in return for sanctions relief.
- **2018 – U.S. Withdraws from JCPOA:** The United States withdrew from the deal and re-imposed sanctions under President Donald Trump.
- **2019 – Military Tensions Escalate:** Iran shot down a U.S. surveillance drone near the Strait of Hormuz. Several oil tankers were attacked in the region.
- **2020 – Killing of Qasem Soleimani:** The U.S. killed Qasem Soleimani, high-ranking Iranian Major General in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and commander of the elite Quds Force, in Baghdad, sharply increasing tensions.
- **October 2023 – Gaza War Escalation:** War between Israel and Hamas intensified regional tensions, with Iran-backed militias attacking U.S. and Israeli targets.
- **April 2024 – Direct Iran–Israel Strikes:** Israel reportedly struck an Iranian consular building in Damascus. Iran retaliated by launching **over 300 missiles and drones at Israel**.
- **October 2024 – Major Missile Exchange:** Iran launched **180 ballistic missiles at Israel**, and Israel carried out major strikes on Iranian missile and air-defence sites.
- **2025 – Renewed U.S. Pressure and Negotiations:** President Trump revived the “**maximum pressure**” campaign while restarting nuclear negotiations with Iran.

- 📌 **June 12, 2025 – IAEA Warning:** The International Atomic Energy Agency declared Iran was violating nuclear obligations.
- 📌 **June 13, 2025 – Israeli Strike on Iran:** Israel launched a **major attack on Iranian nuclear and military facilities.**
- 📌 **June 21, 2025 – U.S. Direct Intervention:** The U.S. attacked Iranian nuclear facilities at **Fordow, Isfahan, and Natanz.**
- 📌 **June 23, 2025 – Iranian Retaliation:** Iran launched missiles at the **Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar**, hosting U.S. forces.
- 📌 **Late June 2025 – Ceasefire Announcement:** President Trump announced a **ceasefire**, though sporadic tensions continued.
- 📌 **February 28, 2026 – Major U.S.–Israel Attack on Iran:** Large-scale strikes killed Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.
 - According to reports, a **US Tomahawk missile strike** hit the **Shajareh Tayyebeh girls' school in Minab, Iran, on February 28, 2026.** The attack, occurring during a U.S.-Israel war with Iran, caused significant casualties, including children, as reported by Human Rights Watch and other sources
- 📌 **March 2026 – Regional War Escalation:**
 - Iran retaliated by attacking U.S. bases and Gulf infrastructure.
 - Hezbollah launched rockets into Israel.
 - Israel expanded air strikes in Lebanon.
- 📌 **March 8, 2026 – New Supreme Leader Appointed:**
 - Iran’s Assembly of Experts appointed Mojtaba Khamenei as the new Supreme Leader.
- 📌 **Energy Crisis:** Iran effectively closed the Strait of Hormuz, causing a global oil shock and forcing the International Energy Agency to release **400 million barrels of oil reserves.**

SOME KEY FACTS ABOUT THE IRAN ISLAMIC REPUBLIC

Location

Iran is a large country in the **Middle East** between Iraq and Afghanistan.

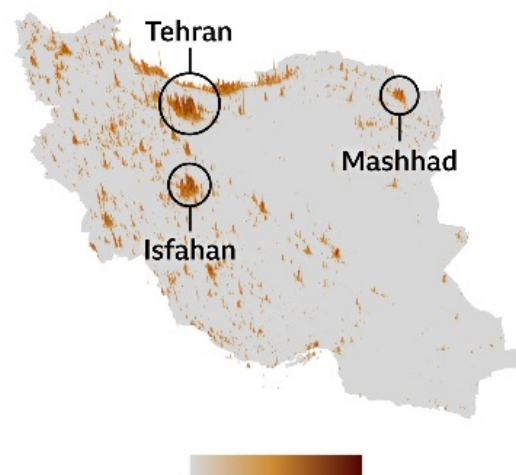
It was home to an ancient civilisation and was known to the outside world as **Persia** until it became Iran in 1935.



Population

It has a population of over **90 million** people - making it one of the biggest countries in the Middle East.

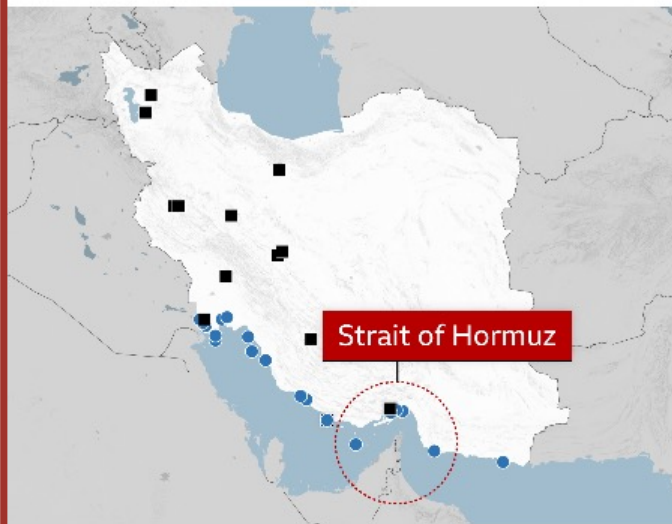
Most people live in the north, where the capital **Tehran** is, and in the west.



Darker shade indicates more people per square km

Economy

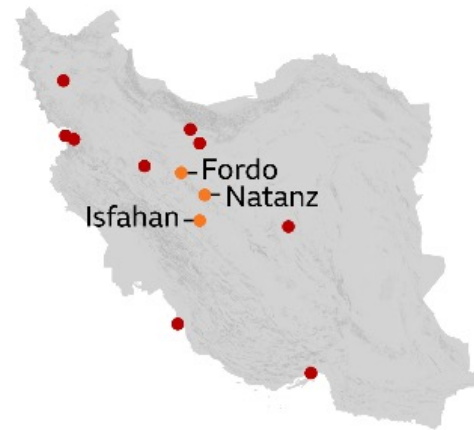
Iran's growth has stagnated after years of sanctions and mismanagement. This is despite the country's **huge oil and gas reserves**, which it exports by sea through the key **Strait of Hormuz**.



■ Oil refineries ● Oil terminals

Nuclear facilities

Iran insists its **nuclear programme** is entirely peaceful and denies that it is seeking to develop nuclear weapons. The US and Israel bombed several of Iran's **key nuclear sites** in June 2025.



● Key nuclear sites ● Sites hit in 2025

Regional relationships

It has backed armed groups across the Middle East, like Palestinian militants **Hamas** and **Hezbollah** in Lebanon. Iran's leaders do not recognise Israel's right to exist and seek its eradication.



◆ Areas where Iranian-backed armed groups operate

Politics

Iran became an **Islamic Republic** in 1979, when the monarchy was ousted. Before he was killed on 28 February, **Ali Khamenei** had been supreme leader since 1989, with ultimate authority.



REASON FOR WAR

♣ Nuclear Programme Concerns:

- o The United States and Israel believe that Iran is trying to **develop nuclear weapons**.
- o Iran insists its **nuclear programme is peaceful**, but Western powers fear it could produce a bomb and missiles capable of delivering it.

♣ Pre-emptive Security Strategy:

- o Israel described the initial strikes as a “**pre-emptive attack**” to remove future threats.
- o The idea here is classic strategic logic **attack before the opponent becomes stronger**.

♣ Iran’s Missile Development:

- o The US and Israel claim Iran has been **developing advanced missiles** that could potentially carry nuclear warheads.
- o There are fears these missiles could threaten Israel and US forces in the region.

♣ Control of Global Oil Routes:

- o Iran sits next to the extremely strategic Strait of Hormuz, through which **around one-fifth of the world’s oil trade passes**. Any conflict involving Iran threatens this shipping route, affecting global oil prices and energy security. Control or disruption of this route has major implications for the global

economy.

♣ Long-standing Hostility Since 1979:

- o Hostility dates back to the Iranian Revolution.
- o Since then
 - Iran has **strongly opposed Israel’s existence**.
 - Iranian leaders have repeatedly **criticised the US and Israel**.

♣ Regional Power Struggle:

- o Iran supports armed groups like Hezbollah and other militias (**Axis of resistance**) in the Middle East.
- o Israel sees these groups as **direct security threats** backed by Iran.

♣ Breakdown of Diplomatic Negotiations:

- o The US and Iran were **engaged in negotiations**, but talks collapsed shortly before the strikes.
- o After negotiations failed, the US and Israel **shifted toward military action**.

♣ Goal of Weakening Iran’s Military, Leadership and regime change:

- o The killing of Ali Khamenei during the strikes shows the **strategic aim of crippling Iran’s command structure**.

CRITICISM ON THE US - ISRAEL ATTACK

● Violation of international law:

- o The strikes were launched without authorization from the **United Nations Security Council**, raising concerns about bypassing international norms.

● Influence of Israeli lobbying:

- o Some critics claim that strong lobbying by pro-Israel groups and strategic pressure from **Israel** influenced the decision of US President **Donald Trump** to support or escalate military action against **Iran**.

● Risk of regime-change intervention:

- o The killing of the Supreme leader and efforts to weaken or collapse the Iranian regime are viewed as external interference in the sovereignty of **Iran** and a violation of the principle of non-intervention.

● Not a genuine pre-emptive strike:

- o The attack cannot be considered a true pre-emptive strike because **Iran** had not launched any direct attack immediately before the strikes began. The war started with coordinated US–Israeli

airstrikes, and Iranian missile attacks came **only as retaliation after the initial bombing campaign**

● Contradiction in human-rights justification:

- o The **United States** has justified military action partly on grounds of protecting human rights and countering authoritarian governance in **Iran**.
- o However, critics question this claim after a **Tomahawk missile strike reportedly hit the Shajareh Tayyebah girls’ school in Minab on February 28, 2026**, causing large civilian casualties, including many children. Investigations and reporting by organizations such as **Human Rights Watch** indicate the attack may have struck a clearly identifiable school building, raising concerns about possible violations of international humanitarian law.

● Petrodollar and energy dominance concerns:

- o The **United States** is anxious about maintaining the dominance of the **Petrodollar System**, where global oil trade is largely conducted in US dollars. Control and security influence in the **Persian**

Gulf, a region through which a large share of the world's oil supply flows, is therefore considered strategically important.

● **Geopolitical control concerns:**

IRAN'S MULTI-LAYER RETALIATION

★ **Missile and Drone Attacks on Israel:**

- o Iran launched **ballistic missiles and drones directly toward Israel**, forcing millions of civilians into shelters while air-defence systems tried to intercept them. These attacks were meant to demonstrate that Iran could still strike Israel despite heavy bombing.

★ **Strikes on U.S. Military Bases in the Region:**

- o Iran targeted **U.S. bases across the Middle East**, including facilities in **Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait**, using missiles and drones. The headquarters of the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet in Bahrain and other American facilities were hit or threatened.

★ **Attacks on Gulf Energy Infrastructure:**

- o Iran struck or threatened **oil facilities and infrastructure** in Gulf countries such as **Saudi Arabia** and the **United Arab Emirates**, damaging refineries and creating fear in global energy markets.

★ **Proxy Warfare Through Regional Allies:**

- o Iran's allied groups also joined the conflict. For example, **Hezbollah** fired rockets from **Lebanon**

- o Weakening **Iran** could help strengthen the strategic influence of the **United States** and **Israel** in **West Asia** and nearby **Central Asia**, which are important for energy routes, security alliances, and geopolitical influence.

into northern Israel, expanding the conflict to another front.

★ **Disrupting Global Oil Supply:**

- o Iran effectively **closed or threatened shipping through the Strait of Hormuz**, a narrow sea route through which about **one-fifth of the world's oil trade passes**, causing a global oil price shock.



GLOBAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

➤ **Oil and Energy Markets:**

- o Around **20% of global oil trade passes through the Strait of Hormuz**, making it one of the most important energy chokepoints in the world.
- o Effects include
 - Rising global oil prices

- Supply disruptions
- Increased shipping risks
- Inflation in fuel and transport costs

- o Energy markets in Europe and Asia are particularly vulnerable due to dependence on Middle Eastern oil and LNG.

IMPACT ON MAJOR POWERS

★ **China:**

- o The **China** may benefit strategically
- o It has large strategic oil reserves.
- o US military resources shifting to the Middle East reduce pressure in the Indo-Pacific.

★ **Russia:**

- o The conflict benefits **Russia** economically
- o Higher oil prices increase Russian energy revenues.

- o Sanctions relief on Russian oil may occur to stabilize global markets.

★ **Gulf Countries:**

- o Countries like the **United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Oman** face direct security risks from missile and drone attacks and disruptions to regional trade.

★ **India:**

- o India imports a large portion of crude oil from the

- o Gulf.
- o Disruption in the **Strait of Hormuz** threatens supply chains.
- o **Economic Effects**
 - Higher fuel prices may increase inflation.
- Shipping and insurance costs may rise.
- o **Strategic Concerns**
 - Safety of the large Indian diaspora in the Gulf region.
 - Balancing relations with the United **States, Israel, and Iran.**

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS FOR THE WEST ASIAN CRISIS

- * **Diplomatic Negotiations and Ceasefire:**
 - o Immediate **ceasefire agreements and diplomatic talks** between **Iran, Israel, and the United States** are essential to prevent further escalation. Mediation by neutral countries and international organizations can help restart dialogue.
- * **Role of International Institutions:**
 - o The **United Nations** and the **International Atomic Energy Agency** should play a stronger role in monitoring nuclear activities, ensuring transparency, and facilitating peaceful negotiations.
- * **Revival of Nuclear Agreements:**
 - o Reviving agreements similar to the **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action** could reduce nuclear tensions and restore international trust regarding Iran's nuclear program.
- * **Regional Security Framework:**
 - o A **collective regional security system** involving Gulf countries such as **Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Qatar** could help manage conflicts, reduce proxy wars, and build mutual confidence.
- * **Protection of Energy Routes:**
 - o International cooperation is needed to ensure safe navigation through critical chokepoints like the **Strait of Hormuz**, which carries a major share of global oil trade.
- * **Humanitarian Assistance and Reconstruction:**
 - o International organizations should provide humanitarian aid to civilians affected by conflict and help rebuild damaged infrastructure.
- * **Reducing Proxy Conflicts:**
 - o Regional powers should work to reduce support for militant groups and proxies operating across the region, which often intensify conflicts.
- * **Balanced Foreign Policy by Global Powers:**
 - o Major powers like **China, Russia, and the United States** should cooperate diplomatically rather than compete strategically in the region.
- * **India's Possible Role:**
 - o As a major energy importer and a country maintaining good relations with multiple sides, **India** can promote dialogue, support peaceful negotiations, and advocate stability in the region.

CONCLUSION

The U.S.–Israel–Iran conflict reflects deeper geopolitical struggles involving nuclear proliferation concerns, regional influence, and control over strategic energy routes. The crisis has the potential to destabilize West Asia, disrupt global oil markets, and intensify great-power competition involving China and Russia. Sustainable peace will require diplomatic engagement, revival of nuclear agreements, and a cooperative regional security framework. Countries like India may play a constructive role in promoting dialogue and stability while safeguarding their energy and strategic interests.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Q) The recent escalation between the United States, Israel, and Iran has highlighted the complex geopolitics of West Asia. Discuss the causes of the conflict, its global implications, and possible pathways for resolution.
(15 marks) (250 words)

YOJANA JANUARY 2026: THE REPUBLIC

FROM PASSIVE BENEFICIARY TO ACTIVE CITIZENS

RSETI (Rural Self Employment Training Institute)

- ➔ A programme of the Ministry of Rural Development that provides **free skill and entrepreneurship training to rural unemployed youth to promote self-employment.**
- ➔ These institutes are **managed by banks with support from the central and state governments**, and offer short-term training (about **1–6 weeks**) in various trades along with credit linkage to help trainees start micro-enterprises.
- ➔ Since inception, over 48 lakh candidates have been trained, with successful settlement (self-employment or entrepreneurship) rates holding steady around 70–75%.



Jan Bhagidari

- ➔ It means **people's participation in governance and development**, where citizens actively contribute to planning, implementation, and monitoring of government policies and programmes.

GENDER BUDGETING & LEGISLATIVE MEASURES FOR SOCIAL EQUALITY

PROGRESS IN VARIOUS PARAMETERS DEFINING GENDER EQUALITY		
TABLE-1		
Parameters	Earlier Time Period	Later Time Period
1. Life Expectancy of Women at Birth (in years)	70.0 (2011-15)	72.7 (2021-25*)
2. Sex Ratio (Number of females per 1,000 males)	943 (2011)	948 (2025*)
3. Maternal Mortality Rate (Number of maternal deaths per one lakh live births)	167 (2011-13)	97 (2018-20)
4. Female Literacy Rate (per cent)	64.6 (2011)	70.3 (2017)
5. Female Labour Force Participation Rate (per cent)	23.3 (2017-18)	41.7 (2023-24)
6. Women-owned Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Number)	4.86 lakh (1.4.2021)	2.49 crore (5.10.2025)
7. Women Electors (per cent of total Electors)	55.8 (2009)	65.8 (2024)
8. Women elected to Lok Sabha (Number)	59 (2009)	74 (2024)

* Projected by The Technical Group on Population Projections
Sources: 1. Women and Men in India, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India.
2. Udyam Registration Portal

Gender Budget Statement

- ➔ **Three-part structure** The Gender Budget Statement is released along with the Union Budget and categorises schemes based on the proportion of funds allocated for women and girls.
- ➔ **Part A:** Includes schemes with **100% allocation for women/girls.**
- ➔ **Part B:** Includes schemes with **30–99% allocation for women/girls.**
- ➔ **Part C:** Includes schemes with **less than 30% allocation for women/girls.**
- ➔ The **Gender Budget Statement 2025–26 lists 61 schemes** under Part A.
- ➔ Budget Estimates for **2025–26 are 19% higher than the Revised Estimates for 2024–25.**
- ➔ Gender Budget share increased from **6.8% in 2024–25 to 8.9% in 2025–26.**

PARADIGM SHIFT: WOMEN LED DEVELOPMENT

Sukanya Samridhi Yojana (SSY)

- ➔ A small-savings scheme launched in **2015 by the Government of India** under the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative to encourage savings for a girl child's education and future.
- ➔ Parents or guardians can open an account for a girl below 10 years with annual deposits of **₹250 to ₹1.5 lakh**, earning about **8.2% interest** with tax benefits under the Income Tax Act.



Women's Representation and Economic Participation in India

- ➔ **Political Representation:**
 - Women currently hold about **15% of seats in the Lok Sabha** and **14% in the Rajya Sabha**.
 - In **2023**, women represented around **13.9% of members in State Legislative Assemblies**.
 - According to the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj (2024)**, about **46.94% of PRI representatives are women** which means **about 1.3 million of India's 3.1 million local elected representatives are women**.
- ➔ **Women's Reservation Law (2023):** Parliament passed the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam**, reserving **one-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women**.
- ➔ **Policy Focus:** The central government has placed "**Nari Shakti**" at the forefront of its development agenda in recent years.
- ➔ **Women in Workforce:** In **2024–25**, major employers expanded opportunities, with the **female workforce reaching about 8.4 million**.
- ➔ **Women in Corporate Leadership:** Women hold about **17% of board positions**, with a gradual rise in leadership roles in companies.
- ➔ **Bank Account Ownership:** Women own **39.2% of bank accounts in India**, with **higher ownership in rural areas (42.2%)**.
- ➔ **Growth of DEMAT Accounts:**
 - Women's participation in the stock market has grown with the rise of **Demat account** holdings.
 - The total number of DEMAT accounts increased from **33.26 million (March 2021)** to **143.02 million (November 2024)**, reflecting a more than **fourfold rise in market participation**.
- ➔ **Rising Workforce Participation:** About **31% of Indian women participated in the market economy in 2015**, increasing to **37% employment among women aged 15+ in 2022–23**.
- ➔ **Increase in Working-Age Participation:** According to the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)**, women constitute **37% of the working-age workforce**, marking a **4.2% increase compared to 2021–22**.
- ➔ **Role in Informal Economy:** Women's economic contribution extends beyond formal jobs, with **significant participation in the informal sector and unpaid care work**.
- ➔ **Agricultural Workforce:** Women are highly concentrated in agriculture, accounting for **about 62.9% of workers in the sector**.
- ➔ **Self-Help Group Mobilisation:** Around **10.04 crore women have been mobilised through over 90.76 lakh Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission to promote economic empowerment and collective action.
- ➔ **Women in MSMEs:** Women constitute about **13.31% of the workforce in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**
- ➔ **Participation in MGNREGA:** In **2022–23**, women accounted for **about 57.43% of workers under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act**, indicating strong participation in rural employment programmes.

THE NEXT LEAP

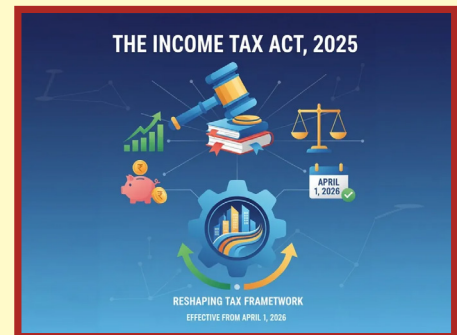
Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)

- ➔ **Launch:** Launched on **28 August 2014** by the Government of India to promote **financial inclusion by providing universal access to banking services**, especially for unbanked households.
- ➔ **Features:** Provides **zero-balance savings accounts, RuPay debit cards with accident insurance, and overdraft facility up to ₹10,000**, along with access to credit, insurance and pension.
- ➔ **Coverage:** As of **2025**, **over 56 crore accounts have been opened**, with **more than 55% belonging to women and about two-thirds in rural/semi-urban areas**, making it one of the world's largest financial inclusion programmes.



Income-tax Act, 2025

- ➔ **Purpose:** A new law enacted by the Parliament of India to **replace the Income-tax Act, 1961 and modernise the country's direct tax system**.
- ➔ **Implementation:** The Act received **presidential assent on 21 August 2025** and will **come into force from 1 April 2026**.
- ➔ **Objective:** It aims to **simplify tax laws, reduce litigation, and improve compliance through clearer language and digital procedures**.
- ➔ **Structure:** The Act contains **536 sections across 23 chapters and 16 schedules**, making it shorter and more organised than the earlier law.
- ➔ **Key Reform:** It introduces a **single "Tax Year" concept**, replacing the earlier distinction between **Previous Year and Assessment Year**.



FI Index (Financial Inclusion Index)

- ➔ The **Financial Inclusion (FI) Index** is published by the Reserve Bank of India to measure the **extent of financial inclusion in India** across sectors such as banking, insurance, investments, pensions, and postal services.
- ➔ It is a **composite index ranging from 0 to 100**, where **0 indicates complete financial exclusion and 100 indicates full financial inclusion**.
- ➔ **The index is based on three parameters: Access (35%), Usage (45%), and Quality (20%)** of financial services.
- ➔ The **FI Index value reached 67 in March 2025**, up from **64.2 in March 2024**, showing progress in financial inclusion in India.

CLIMATE FINANCE

Major International Climate Finance Mechanisms

- ➔ **Global Environment Facility (GEF):** Started in **1992**, it operates as an **operational entity of the financial mechanism** for several environmental conventions.
- ➔ **Green Climate Fund (GCF):** Established in **2010 at COP16 in Cancun**, it became the **world's largest climate fund** and an operating entity in **2011**, using flexible funding, climate investment knowledge, and country-driven partnerships to accelerate climate action in developing nations.
- ➔ **Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF):** Set up in **2001**, it supports **climate adaptation programmes of developing countries** and is managed under the financial mechanism by the **GEF**.



- ➔ **Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF):** Also established in **2001 under the Kyoto Protocol**, it assists **least developed countries with adaptation programmes** and is managed by the **GEF**.
- ➔ **Adaptation Fund (AF):** Created in **2001 under the Kyoto Protocol** and operational from **2007**, it finances **specific adaptation projects in highly climate-vulnerable developing nations**
- ➔ **Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage:** Established in **2023 at COP28**, it supports **developing countries vulnerable to climate impacts**, with the **World Bank invited to operationalise the fund**.

Sovereign Green Bonds

- ➔ **Definition:** Sovereign Green Bonds are **debt securities issued by the Government of India** to raise funds exclusively for **environmentally sustainable and climate-friendly projects** such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, clean transport, and pollution control.
- ➔ **Purpose & Framework:** They were first introduced after being announced in the **Union Budget for 2022-23** and are issued under a government framework in collaboration with the **Reserve Bank of India**; proceeds go to eligible **green infrastructure and climate mitigation projects**.

LIFE AND THE VEDIC WAY

Mission LIFE (Lifestyle for Environment)

- ➔ **India-led global movement:** Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at **COP26 (2021)**, Mission LiFE aims to **mobilise individuals and communities worldwide to adopt environmentally conscious lifestyles** to protect the planet.
- ➔ **Behavioural change focus:** It seeks to replace the “use-and-dispose” model with **mindful, deliberate resource use and sustainable consumption**, encouraging small daily acts that collectively reduce environmental impact.
- ➔ **Mass participation goal:** The mission is designed to mobilise at least **one billion citizens globally**, with the aim that **80% of villages and urban local bodies in India become environment-friendly by 2028**.
- ➔ **Three-phase approach:** Mission LiFE promotes **change in demand (individual actions), change in supply (industry response), and change in policy (systemic shifts)** to support sustainable production and consumption.

INTEGRATING VEDIC PRINCIPLES INTO LIFE BEHAVIOURAL FOCUS			
LiFE Behavioural Focus	Vedic Principle/concept	Philosophical core	Sustainable Implications
4 R's (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Refuse)	Aparigraha (non-hoarding)	Promotes simple living and liberty from possessiveness.	Limit waste production and encourages circular economy.
Green energy practices	Prakriti Raksha (nature conservation)	Responsible use of natural resources.	Minimises carbon footprint and advocates clean energy.
Community led initiatives	Yajna (spirit of sacrifice)	Encourages joint welfare and mutual interdependence.	Promotes community participation and social justice.
Growth with ecological balance	Rta (Cosmic order)	Fosters harmony between humankind and nature.	Ensures climate smart development.
Individual and collective behavioural shift	Satya and Dharma (truth and righteousness)	Advocates ethical lifestyle.	Generates a culture script of sustainability.

ANCIENT WISDOM, MODERN LIFE

Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO)

- ➔ An initiative launched by the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)** to **collect and convert used cooking oil (UCO)** from food establishments into **biodiesel and other eco-friendly products**, preventing its unsafe reuse in food and harmful environmental disposal.
- ➔ The programme aims to **curb health hazards** caused by repeatedly reused oil (high in harmful Total Polar Compounds) and create a **sustainable ecosystem of collection, aggregation, and processing** through registered aggregators and biodiesel manufacturers.

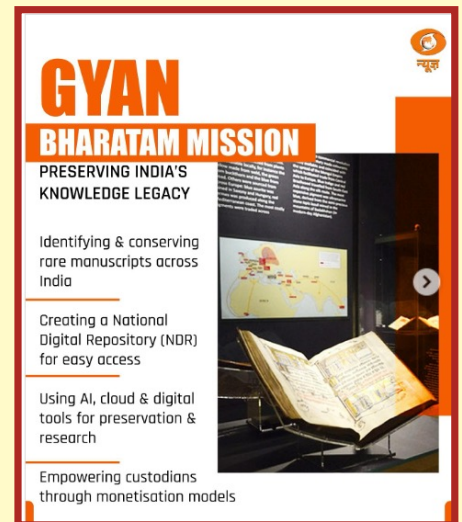
GOBARdhan (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan) Yojana

- ➔ **Launch and Objective:** Launched in **2018** under the **Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G)**, GOBARdhan seeks to **transform cattle and organic waste into energy and compost**, promoting clean villages and better waste management.
- ➔ **Waste-to-Wealth Focus:** It facilitates the **scientific processing of organic and bio-degradable waste into biogas, bio-CNG, bio-fertilisers, and other value-added.**

INTEGRATING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

ASMITA (Augmenting Study Materials in Indian Languages through Translation and Academic Writing)

- ➔ A project launched by the **Ministry of Education and the University Grants Commission (UGC)** to promote Indian languages in education.
- ➔ The initiative aims to develop **22,000 books in 22 scheduled Indian languages over the next five years** by translating existing academic content and creating original textbooks, enriching higher education resources



THE ADVENT OF QUICK COMMERCE

Q-commerce (Quick Commerce)

- ➔ An ultra-fast **delivery model** of e-commerce that focuses on delivering goods to customers **within minutes (often 10–30 minutes) instead of days**, especially essentials like groceries, food and daily necessities.
- ➔ It operates through **hyper-local fulfillment networks using dark stores and micro-warehouses**, strategically placed near customers to enable rapid order processing and delivery.
- ➔ Q-commerce has grown rapidly in India with companies such as **Blinkit, Zepto, Swiggy Instamart and BigBasket Now.**

Quick Commerce Market Size (GMV/GOV) in India

Year	GMV (Billion USD)
2022	0.3
2023	3.0
2024	6.5
2025	7.4

(Source - Multiple reports published by Bain & Company, JM Financials, CLSA, etc.)

Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

- ➔ **Real-Time Payment System:** UPI is a **real-time digital payment system** developed by the **National Payments Corporation of India**, facilitating instant fund transfers between bank accounts.
- ➔ **Annual Growth (2024):** In 2024, UPI **processed around 172 billion transactions**, a **46% increase from 118 billion in 2023**, with **transaction value also growing by 28%.**
- ➔ **Monthly Record (Oct 2025):** In **October 2025**, UPI handled **over 20.7 billion transactions worth ₹27.3 lakh crore**, highlighting its widespread adoption and usage.


INNOVATION IN GOVERNANCE

integrating VEDIC PRINCIPLES INTO LIFE BEHAVIOURAL FOCUS

India's AI Revolution #SevaParv
AI Adoption & Industry Growth

KEY FOCUS AREA	DATA & PROJECTIONS
STRATEGIC ADOPTION	80% Indian companies consider AI a core strategic priority, <i>surpassing</i> global average of 75%.
MARKET GROWTH	India's AI market is projected to grow at a CAGR [^] of 25%-35%.
TALENT HUB STATUS	One of the top five fastest-growing AI talent hubs; 14-fold <i>increase</i> in AI-skilled workforce from 2016 to 2023.

* (Source Data: Various National & Global AI Reports) * (Metrics as of 2023)



UMANG (Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance)

- ➔ A **Digital India** initiative by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** and **National e-Governance Division (NeGD)** that provides a single platform to access government services from central, state, and local bodies.
- ➔ Launched in **2017**, the app gives citizens access to **hundreds of services** (e.g., healthcare, finance, education, utility bills, LPG booking, social security), and is available across **mobile app, web, SMS, and IVR** channels with **multi-lingual support**.

CPGRAMS (Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System)

- ➔ **CPGRAMS** is the **online public grievance redressal platform of the Government of India** that enables citizens to file, track, and resolve complaints related to public services, policies, and government departments at both the **central and state level**.
- ➔ It is accessible 24x7 through web and mobile (including via the **UMANG app**), providing users with a **unique registration ID to monitor grievance status** and the ability to **escalate unresolved issues** to higher authorities.

WEEKLY DOSSIERS

WOMEN'S POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN INDIA: PROGRESS AND PERSISTENT GAPS

Women's participation in India's electoral politics has witnessed a remarkable transformation over the past six decades. Women now vote at rates nearly equal to, and sometimes higher than, men. However, this progress has not translated into proportional representation in legislatures. The Indian experience reflects a paradox of **electoral inclusion without political empowerment**, highlighting the need for structural reforms to enhance women's representation.

Women as Voters: A Major Transformation

- ◆ **Early gender gap in voter turnout**
 - In the **1967 Lok Sabha election**, male turnout was **66.7%**, while female turnout was **55.5%**.
 - The gap widened slightly to **11.8 percentage points in 1971**.
 - Reasons included
 - Low female literacy
 - Limited mobility
 - Domestic responsibilities
 - Weak political outreach to women
- ◆ **Gradual narrowing of the turnout gap**
 - From the **1980s onwards**, the gender gap steadily declined.
 - By **2009**, the gap reduced to **4.4 percentage points**.
- ◆ **Near parity in recent elections**
 - In **2014**, the gap fell to **1.5 percentage points**.
 - In **2019 and 2024**, women voted **almost at the same rate as men**.
- ◆ **Women surpassing men in State elections**
 - In many State Assembly elections after **2011**, women's turnout exceeded men's.
 - Between **2020–2025**, women voted **about 1.6 percentage points more than men** on average.

Representation in Parliament: The Persistent Gap

- ◆ **Historical trend**
 - **1952 Lok Sabha**: only **22 women MPs**.
 - **1977**: representation dropped to **19 women MPs**.
- ◆ **Recent improvements**
 - **2009**: 59 women MPs
 - **2014**: 62 women MPs
 - **2019**: record **78 women MPs**
 - **2024**: **74 women MPs**

Even at its peak, women constituted **only about 14% of the Lok Sabha**, far below their share of the electorate.

Structural and Social Barriers

- ◆ **Patriarchal social structures**
 - Patriarchy is cited as the **largest obstacle (22%)**.
- ◆ **Household responsibilities**
 - Domestic work limits time and opportunity for political activity.
- ◆ **Limited political autonomy**
 - Many women vote **after consulting family members**.
- ◆ **Institutional barriers**
 - Women perceive structural disadvantages
 - **58%** believe political families have an advantage.
 - **57%** think economic background matters.
 - **44%** feel parties prefer male candidates.

Role of Institutional Reforms

A key development is the passage of the **Women's Reservation Bill** through the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam. Key provisions include

- ◆ **33% reservation for women in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies**.
- ◆ Reservation within **SC/ST seats**.
- ◆ Implementation linked to **delimitation after the next census**.

Way Forward

- ◆ Political parties should **increase ticket allocation to women**.
- ◆ Strengthen **leadership training and political mentoring** for women.
- ◆ Improve **financial and campaign support for female candidates**.
- ◆ Promote **gender-sensitive political culture**.
- ◆ Ensure effective implementation of **women's**

reservation in legislatures.

Conclusion

India has made significant progress in achieving gender parity in voter participation. However, representation in political institutions remains limited due to social norms, institutional barriers, and nomination constraints. Bridging the gap between **participation and power** will require sustained policy reforms, institutional commitment, and societal change to ensure women play an equal role in India's democratic governance.

RIGHT TO DIE WITH DIGNITY: SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS WITHDRAWAL OF LIFE SUPPORT

In a significant judgment reinforcing the constitutional value of human dignity, the Supreme Court of India held that the **right to die with dignity can prevail over the State's interest in preserving life** in exceptional medical circumstances. The Court allowed the withdrawal of life support to a 32-year-old man who had remained in a **persistent vegetative state (PVS) for over 12 years**, emphasising that dignity must be protected both **during life and in the process of dying**.

Constitutional Basis of the Right to Die with Dignity

- ◆ **Article 21 – Right to Life and Personal Liberty**
 - Article 21 guarantees the **right to live with dignity**.
 - The Court held that **dignity continues even in the process of death**.
- ◆ **Evolution of Judicial Interpretation**
 - Indian courts have gradually expanded the meaning of life and dignity.
 - Key cases include
 - **Aruna Shanbaug Case**
 - Recognised **passive euthanasia** under strict guidelines.
 - **Common Cause v Union of India**
 - Recognised the **right to die with dignity**.
 - Allowed **living wills and advanced medical directives**.
 - The latest judgment strengthens these precedents.

Understanding Passive Euthanasia

- ◆ Passive euthanasia involves

- **Withdrawal or withholding of life-support systems**
- Allowing a patient to **die naturally without aggressive medical intervention**
- ◆ It is different from **active euthanasia**, where deliberate action is taken to cause death, which remains illegal in India.

Key Observations of the Supreme Court

- ◆ **Dignity must be protected even during death**
 - The Court stated that dignity is the **most sacred possession of a human being** and does not diminish during the process of dying.
- ◆ **Futile medical treatment cannot override dignity**
 - Prolonging life artificially when recovery is impossible may result in **unnecessary pain and suffering**.
- ◆ **State interest is not absolute**
 - The State has an interest in preserving life, but it **cannot override the individual's dignity indefinitely**.
- ◆ **Technology should not prolong suffering**
 - Modern medical technology can sustain biological life, but **mere survival without dignity cannot be the constitutional goal**.

Challenges in Implementing the Right to Die with Dignity

- ◆ **Risk of misuse**
 - Possibility of coercion or family pressure in vulnerable situations.

- ◆ **Lack of awareness**
 - Many citizens are unaware of **living wills and advance directives**.
- ◆ **Institutional constraints**
 - Hospitals often lack **clear protocols for end-of-life decisions**.
- ◆ **Ethical dilemmas for doctors**
 - Medical practitioners may face **legal and moral uncertainties**.

Way Forward

- ◆ Create **clear national guidelines** for passive euthanasia.
- ◆ Promote awareness about **living wills and advance**

directives.

- ◆ Strengthen **hospital ethics committees**.
- ◆ Ensure **strict safeguards to prevent misuse**.
- ◆ Integrate **palliative care services** into public healthcare systems.

Conclusion

The judgment reaffirms that the **right to dignity is central to the Indian Constitution**. By recognising that dignity extends to the end of life, the Supreme Court of India has strengthened the ethical and constitutional framework governing end-of-life decisions. The ruling marks an important step toward balancing **medical technology, human dignity, and constitutional rights** in India's healthcare system.

INDIA'S QUIET DEMOGRAPHIC REVOLUTION

For decades, India's development discourse was dominated by concerns about rapid population growth, influenced by works such as *The Population Bomb* by Paul R. Ehrlich. However, India has undergone a **rapid fertility transition**, transforming from a high-fertility country into a **near-replacement fertility society**, according to data from National Family Health Survey.

Fertility Transition in India

- ◆ **Sharp decline in Total Fertility Rate (TFR)**
 - India's TFR declined from **around 4 children per woman in the 1990s** to **around 2.0 today**.
 - Replacement fertility level is **2.1 children per woman**.
 - Most Indian States are **already below replacement fertility**.
- ◆ **Evidence from NFHS rounds**
 - Early surveys showed TFR between **3–5 children** in many States.
 - Later rounds show **steady decline across regions**.
 - The latest survey shows the majority of **States clustered below replacement level**.
- ◆ **Convergence across States**
 - Earlier regional divide
 - **South India - Low fertility**
 - **North and Central India - High fertility**
 - Now fertility differences are **narrowing across India**.

Major Drivers of Fertility Decline

- ◆ **Rising women's education**
 - Higher education increases **career opportunities for women**.
 - Raises **opportunity cost of early childbirth**.
 - Leads to **delayed marriage and fewer children**.
- ◆ **Delayed marriage**
 - The average age at marriage has increased.
 - A shorter reproductive window reduces fertility.
- ◆ **Urbanisation and migration**
 - Exposure to urban lifestyles and smaller families.
 - Migration spreads **low-fertility norms across regions**.
- ◆ **Family planning awareness**
 - Long-term **government family planning campaigns**.
 - Increased access to contraception and reproductive health services.
- ◆ **Public health improvements**
 - Better vaccination and maternal care reduce **child mortality**.
 - Families no longer feel the need for **"extra children as insurance"**.
- ◆ **Rising cost of raising children**
 - Education, healthcare and housing costs have increased.
 - Children have shifted from **economic contributors to investment projects**.

Implications of India's Demographic Transition

- ◆ **Demographic dividend**
 - Large **working-age population** with fewer dependents.
 - Opportunity for **rapid economic growth**.
 - However, benefits depend on
 - Job creation
 - Industrialisation
 - Skill development
- ◆ **Population ageing**
 - States with very low fertility will experience **aging populations earlier**.
 - Increased demand for
 - Healthcare
 - Pension systems
 - Elderly care infrastructure.
- ◆ **Migration patterns**
 - Younger workers from **high-fertility northern States** may migrate to **low-fertility southern and western States**.
 - This will shape
 - Labour markets
 - Urbanisation

- Regional economies.

◆ **Political and fiscal implications**

- Fertility differences may influence
 - Fiscal transfers between States
 - Political representation
 - Regional development debates.

Policy Priorities for a Low-Fertility India

India must shift focus from **population control to demographic management**

- ◆ Create **labour-absorbing industries**.
- ◆ Strengthen **healthcare systems for ageing populations**.
- ◆ Develop **sustainable pension systems**.
- ◆ Improve **urban infrastructure** for migrants.
- ◆ Provide **childcare and social support systems**.
- ◆ Invest in **education and skill development**.

Conclusion

India's demographic narrative has shifted dramatically from fears of population explosion to the realities of a **low-fertility society**. The challenge now is not controlling population growth but **harnessing the demographic dividend while preparing for aging, migration, and social transformation**. Effective economic and social policies will determine whether this quiet demographic revolution becomes a **development opportunity or a missed chance**

BEYOND VERDICTS: KEY JUDICIAL INTERVENTIONS

Need for Greater Women's Representation in the Judiciary

- ◆ Addressing the First National Conference of Indian Women in Law, the D. Y. Chandrachud highlighted that increasing women's participation in the judiciary is essential for strengthening its credibility and inclusiveness.
- ◆ At present, women remain underrepresented across higher courts. In the Supreme Court of India there is only **one woman judge out of 33**, while women constitute about **14.85% of judges in High Courts**.
- ◆ The representation is relatively better in **district courts, where women make up around 37% of judges**, indicating a decline in numbers at higher levels. This gap arises due to factors such as the **seniority-cum-merit system**, which favours long legal careers traditionally dominated by men, structural barriers within the **collegium-based appointment process**, and workplace challenges including gender bias and inadequate infrastructure.
- ◆ Additionally, the **"leaky pipeline" phenomenon** means that although many women enter the judiciary at lower levels, far fewer reach senior judicial positions.

Supreme Court Order on Women Representation in Bar Associations

- ◆ The Supreme Court of India has empowered **District Judges to nominate women members to the Executive Committees of Bar Associations** within their jurisdictions to ensure **at least 30% representation of women**.
- ◆ The order was issued by a bench headed by Surya Kant after noting that several Bar Associations had not met the

mandated representation despite having eligible women lawyers. District Judges can nominate women where they are available but unable to contest elections, and compliance reports will be forwarded through High Courts to the Supreme Court.

Supreme Court Applies Passive Euthanasia Framework

- ◆ The Supreme Court of India, in the case of Harish Rana v. Union of India, applied the **passive euthanasia framework for the first time**, allowing the withdrawal of artificial life support for a man who had remained in a vegetative state for over 12 years.
- ◆ The Court relied on the **“best interest of the patient” principle** and waived the usual **30-day waiting period**, as both medical boards and the patient’s parents unanimously agreed that recovery was impossible.

Creamy Layer in OBC Reservation

- ◆ The Supreme Court of India observed that the **creamy layer status of Other Backward Classes (OBCs)** cannot be determined solely on the basis of **parental income**. It also noted that treating employees of private companies and public sector undertakings differently from government employees while deciding creamy layer status would amount to discrimination.
- ◆ The concept of the **creamy layer** emerged from the landmark Indra Sawhney v. Union of India, which upheld **27% reservation for OBCs in civil posts** while excluding the more advanced sections among them.
- ◆ The criteria were later suggested by the **Ram Nandan Prasad Committee**, and the income limit for identifying the creamy layer was raised to **₹8 lakh in 2017**.

Supreme Court on Privy Purse Claims of Mizo Chiefs

- ◆ The Supreme Court of India dismissed a petition by the Mizo Chief Council seeking a **privy purse like benefits and additional compensation for lands acquired in the former Lushai Hills (present-day Mizoram)**.
- ◆ The Court ruled that **privy purses granted to rulers of princely states were political and contractual arrangements before the Constitution and cannot be claimed as a legally enforceable right**.
- ◆ It also held that the petitioners failed to prove **clear ownership of the land or violation of property rights**, noting that compensation had already been provided under the **Assam Lushai Hills District (Acquisition of Chief’s Rights) Act, 1954**.

ETHICS - CASE STUDY

Q) Ananya is the District Programme Officer responsible for overseeing a government-supported skill development centre for women in her district. The centre trains young women from rural and economically weaker backgrounds to improve their employment opportunities. Recently, several trainees informally complained that one of the senior instructors has been making inappropriate comments and creating a hostile environment for women trainees. However, the women are hesitant to file a formal complaint because they fear losing their training certificates, social stigma, and possible retaliation. The centre management argues that the instructor is highly experienced and that such allegations may damage the reputation of the institution. Some officials advise Ananya to ignore the issue unless a formal written complaint is submitted, while local women's groups demand immediate action to ensure a safe and dignified environment for trainees. Ananya must decide how to respond while ensuring fairness, gender justice, and institutional credibility.

Questions

- Identify the ethical issues and stakeholders involved in the case.
- What are the values and principles that should guide Ananya in this situation?
- What options are available to her to address the issue?
- Suggest a balanced and ethical course of action to ensure women's safety and institutional accountability.

ETHICS - EXAMPLES

- Perseverance:** Sanju Samson faced many setbacks in his career, including long gaps after his 2015 international debut, repeated exclusions from the playing XI where he even served as a drinks carrier, criticism for inconsistency and injuries. Despite these challenges, his dedication and perseverance eventually paid off as he played a key role in India's triumph at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, turning years of setbacks into success.
- Environmental Ethics:** Mohammed Mehrajuddin from Kargil once feared the Himalayan brown bear, with over 80 incidents reported in 2021 due to expanding settlements and food waste. He now volunteers with the "Bear Brothers," a community group trained by WWF-India to monitor bear movement using tools and promote coexistence with the species.
- Social Responsibility:** Learning Companions runs flexible education centres for children of the nomadic Bharwad community in Maharashtra, ensuring learning continues during seasonal migration by sending fellows to camps with worksheets. Since the programme began in 2019, nearly 70% of the 153 children have become independent readers, compared to less than 10% earlier.
- Justice:** The Kerala High Court directed the Government of Kerala to provide free medical treatment and education until the age of 21 to a nine-year-old girl whose right hand was amputated following alleged medical negligence at the Palakkad District Hospital after improper fracture treatment in September 2025
- Dedication:** Sreeja J S from Thiruvananthapuram kept a note on her wall for two years reading "Sreeja JS IFS, AIR 15 UPSC" to stay motivated during preparation. Despite financial hardships, her father cycled long distances for daily wage construction work and even pledged family gold for her studies, and she persevered to secure AIR 57 in the UPSC Civil Services Examination.
- Public Service Delivery:** Greater Chennai Corporation inaugurated an Early Intervention Centre in Perambur, Chennai, to provide free specialised therapy for children aged 2–7 with developmental disabilities, including speech, occupational, hydro, sand, psychological, and sensory therapies. Established at a cost of ₹1.29 crore it offers services that can otherwise cost up to ₹2,500 per session in private clinics.
- Leadership:** In Danwa village of Bhojpur district, mukhiya Sushumlata Kushwaha established a sanitary pad unit in 2022 under the Bihar government's Industrial Innovation Scheme with ₹10 lakh support, producing about **4,000–4,500 pads daily** using a machine developed with IIT Bombay and employing nine women to promote affordable menstrual hygiene (₹23 for six pads).

MODEL ESSAY

"Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence"

Introduction

- Quote by Vince Lombardi
- Chasing perfection is not about the destination (the flawless result) but about the **calibration of the journey** (the high standards).

Importance of the Pursuit of Perfection

- **Encourages Hard Work and Discipline:** When people aim for perfection, they invest greater effort, attention, and commitment in their tasks.
- **Promotes Innovation and Creativity:** The desire to improve constantly encourages individuals to experiment with new ideas and techniques. **Eg:** SpaceX and Reusable Rockets.
- **Builds Character and Resilience:** The pursuit of high standards develops patience, determination, and the ability to learn from failure
- **Fosters Long-Term Vision:** Chasing perfection prevents "short-termism." & forces to build things that last. **Eg:** The architectural precision of **The Pyramids of Giza** that has endured for 4,500 years.

Nature and Meaning of Excellence

- Excellence emphasizes learning, improvement, and mastery rather than flawless outcomes.
- As Aristotle famously noted, excellence is not an act, but a habit.
- Unlike perfectionism, excellence involves setting challenging but attainable goals that encourage progress.

Limitations of Excessive Perfectionism

- **Risk of Delays and Overthinking:** Excessive obsession with perfection may lead to procrastination or inability to complete tasks.
- **Fear of Failure:** People may avoid trying new things if they fear not achieving perfect results.
- **Need for Balance:** Therefore, the pursuit of

perfection should inspire improvement rather than create unrealistic expectations.

Way Forward

- **Adopt a Growth Mindset:** Focus on continuous improvement rather than flawless results, treating mistakes as learning opportunities. **Eg:** James Dyson created 5,126 "imperfect" prototypes of vacuum before reaching the one that worked.
- **Set High but Realistic Goals:** Ambitious yet achievable goals motivate progress without creating excessive pressure. **Eg:** The 80/20 Rule (Pareto Principle) focuses on the 20% of effort that produces 80% of the results.
- **Encourage Innovation and Experimentation:** Accepting failures in experimentation can lead to breakthroughs, as seen in the missions of ISRO like Chandrayaan-3 mission.
- **Promote Ethical Excellence:** True excellence should include moral values and integrity, exemplified by Mahatma Gandhi's commitment to truth and non-violence.
- **Practice Continuous Self-Improvement:** Regular practice and discipline help individuals achieve excellence, as demonstrated by athletes like Usain Bolt.

Conclusion

- Perfection may remain beyond human reach, yet it continues to inspire individuals and societies to strive for higher standards.
- Perfection is the bait; excellence is the prize.

Sample Quotes

- *Humility, that low, sweet root, from which all heavenly virtues shoot - Thomas Moore*
- *Words are but the signs of ideas -Samuel Johnson*
- *No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear -Edmund Burke*

MAINS JOT DOWN



GS I: PERSONALITIES IN NEWS

- Savitribai Phule (1831–1897) was a pioneering social reformer and educator, born in Naigaon in Maharashtra.
- She became the **first female teacher at the first girls' school in Pune** and worked extensively for women's education and social reform. She founded the **Mahila Seva Mandal** to promote women's rights and established the **Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha** to support vulnerable pregnant women.
- She also helped create the **Native Female School in Pune** and initiated the first **Satyashodhak marriage**, which rejected dowry and Brahminical rituals. Her literary works include *Kavya Phule* and *Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar*. She died in 1897 while caring for patients during a plague epidemic.



GS II: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- India recently supplied **5,000 metric tonnes of diesel** to Bangladesh through the **India–Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline**, inaugurated in 2023.
- It is the **first cross-border energy pipeline between the two countries**, with a capacity of **1 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) of high-speed diesel**. The **131-km pipeline** connects the **Siliguri Marketing Terminal in India** to the **Parbatipur depot in northern Bangladesh**, strengthening bilateral energy cooperation.



GS II: GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

- The Union Cabinet has approved the extension of the Jal Jeevan Mission until **2028**, with a shift from merely creating infrastructure to ensuring **sustainable water service delivery, institutional accountability, and local governance**.
- New initiatives include **Sujalam Bharat**, a digital platform for mapping the drinking water supply system from source to tap; **Jal Arpan**, which involves Gram Panchayats and village committees in handing over water schemes; and **Jal Utsav**, promoting annual community events to strengthen water conservation and collective responsibility.



GS II: PARLIAMENT

- Article 105 defines the **powers, privileges, and immunities of Parliament and its members**.
- It guarantees **freedom of speech in Parliament**, protecting Members of Parliament from legal proceedings for anything said or any vote given in the House or its committees. It also provides immunity for the **publication of parliamentary proceedings authorised by either House**.
- Other parliamentary privileges are determined by Parliament by law or follow those existing at the time of the **44th Constitutional Amendment (1978)**. The Article also applies to persons entitled to participate in proceedings, such as MPs and the Attorney General of India.



GS III: INFRASTRUCTURE

→ The National Highways Authority of India, with the National Remote Sensing Centre, launched the first **NH Green Cover Index (2025–26)**. It assesses **green cover along about 30,000 km of national highways across 24 States** (July–December 2024) and will monitor **year-to-year changes using satellite data** from Resourcesat-2 and Cartosat-2S.

→ V.O. Chidambaranar Port (formerly Tuticorin Port) became the **first port in India to launch a Digital Twin initiative**. A **digital twin** is a virtual replica of a physical system that uses real-time data to monitor and simulate its performance.

→ For port management, it will create a **real-time digital model of the port's infrastructure and operations**, enabling better monitoring, predictive analysis, and data-driven decision-making. The system will use technologies such as **IoT sensors, GPS tracking, LiDAR mapping, drones, and CCTV** to improve efficiency and port management.



GS III: INDIAN ECONOMY

→ The NITI Aayog released the **second edition of the Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2026**, which evaluates the fiscal performance of States.

→ The index is important as States account for **about one-third of India's general government debt** and play a major role in delivering public services.

→ **Odisha** ranked first in the *Achiever category*, followed by **Goa** and **Jharkhand**, due to higher own-tax revenue, large capital expenditure (4–5% of GSDP), low fiscal deficits (below 3%), and moderate debt levels. In contrast, **Punjab, West Bengal, and Kerala** ranked lower due to higher non-developmental expenditure and weaker fiscal sustainability.



GS III: DEFENCE

→ An Indian Armed Forces contingent has arrived in Seychelles to participate in **Exercise LAMITIYE**, a **biennial joint military exercise between India and Seychelles**.

→ The **2026 edition** marks the **first tri-services participation from India**, involving the Army, Navy, and Air Force, aimed at strengthening defence cooperation and interoperability between the two countries.

→ The Indian Army launched a major bridge construction project in Sri Lanka under **Operation Sagar Bandhu**.

→ The operation was launched in **November 2025** to provide **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)** following the devastation caused by Cyclone Ditwah.

→ The initiative reflects India's **Neighbourhood First policy** and the **MAHASAGAR vision** for regional cooperation.



GS I: INDIAN ART & HERITAGE

→ **Kurumba painting** is a **3,000-year-old tribal folk art** practiced by the **Kurumba tribe**, a Kurumba Tribe found in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka.

→ The art depicts **rituals, festivals, nature, animals, and community life**, using **natural pigments from forest materials such as tree resin and crushed leaves**.

→ Characterised by **simple motifs, dots, lines, and geometric patterns**, these paintings were traditionally created on **walls and temples**, serving as a visual record of tribal culture. Today, the tradition faces the risk of extinction.

CHERRYPICKS OF THE WEEK

DARK WEB AND DEEP WEB

- The internet is broadly divided into three layers the **surface web, deep web, and dark web**. The **surface web** is the portion accessible through regular browsers and search engines such as Google, and it constitutes only about **10% of the internet**.
- The remaining **90% lies in the deep web and dark web**, which are not indexed by standard search engines. While the **deep web** includes private databases, academic records, and restricted websites, the **dark web** operates on special overlay networks and requires specific software like Tor (The Onion Router) to access.

WAR OF ATTRITION

- It is a military strategy where a country seeks to defeat its enemy by **gradually exhausting its manpower, resources, and morale through prolonged conflict** rather than quick victories. This approach relies on **sustained attacks and endurance** to outlast the opponent, as seen during trench warfare in World War I.

DARK OXYGEN

- It refers to oxygen produced in the deep ocean **without sunlight**, unlike the oxygen generated through photosynthesis. It is believed to form through **electrochemical reactions involving polymetallic nodules on the ocean floor**. This discovery challenges the long-held view that **photosynthesis is the only major natural source of oxygen on Earth**.

WHITE PHOSPHORUS

- It is a yellowish-white waxy substance that **glows in the dark and ignites on contact with air**. It is **highly toxic**, causing severe burns and internal damage. In warfare, it is used mainly for **smoke screens and illumination**, and its use is **restricted under international humanitarian law**.

SUPPLEMENTARY DEMAND FOR GRANTS

- Under **Article 115 of the Constitution**, the President of India places a **Supplementary Demand for Grants** before both Houses of Parliament of India when additional expenditure is required during a financial year beyond what was approved in the Budget. Such demands may be **token, technical, or substantive (cash)** depending on the nature of the additional expenditure.