

# THE PALA CIVIL TIMES



Civil Service Institute | Pala | Thiruvananthapuram | South India's Premier Civil Service Coaching Institute | [www.civilservicepala.org](http://www.civilservicepala.org)

## NATIONAL Page 2



**SC voices 'reservations' on its own bail decision**

THE HINDU : 19-05-2026

## SCIENCE Page 4



**Minimum temperatures are rising faster than maximum**

THE HINDU : 19-05-2026

## INTERNATIONAL Page 2



**Modi meets Norwegian PM as they seek to raise ties to Green Strategic Partnership**

THE HINDU : 19-05-2026

## ECONOMICS Page 10



**The warning signs in India's import bill**

THE HINDU : 19-05-2026

## EDITORIALS DECODED FOR UPSC



**Waiting for the storm**

*Despite the predictability of weather events, India remains vulnerable*



**On Saranda forests, Jharkhand must heed SC**



**Future shock**

*Q4 results strong but momentum under question*



*Full coverage of mains and prelims dimensions with every topic*



**PRELIMS 2026  
COUNTDOWN  
5 DAYS TO GO**



## SC voices 'reservations' on its own bail decision

The Supreme Court recently expressed serious reservations about aspects of its earlier judgment denying bail to former JNU student leader Umar Khalid and co-accused Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 Delhi riots conspiracy case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). While granting bail to a Jammu & Kashmir undertrial accused in a narco-terrorism case, the Court reiterated that "bail is the rule and jail is the exception" even in UAPA cases, emphasising that prolonged incarceration without trial violates Article 21. The judgment highlights the constitutional tension between national security laws and protection of personal liberty.



### 360° MAINS ANALYSIS

#### Constitutional Dimensions

**Article 21 Supremacy** : The Supreme Court reaffirmed that statutory restrictions under UAPA cannot override the constitutional guarantee of personal liberty under Article 21.

**Speedy Trial Principle** : The judgment recognised that prolonged incarceration without timely trial effectively converts detention into punishment before conviction.

**Judicial Review** : The ruling reinforces the constitutional role of higher judiciary in preventing arbitrary state action under stringent security laws.

#### Governance & Legal Dimensions

**Restrictive Bail Framework** : Section 43D(5) of UAPA creates an exceptionally low threshold for denying bail, thereby strengthening prosecutorial power.

**Burden on Investigation Agencies** : The Court indirectly highlighted systemic delays in investigation and trial that contribute to excessive undertrial detention.

**Criminal Justice Reform Need** : The case reflects broader concerns regarding pendency, overcrowded prisons, and delay in disposal of terrorism-related cases.

#### Human Rights Dimensions

**Presumption of Innocence** : The Court reiterated that the presumption of innocence remains central even in national security cases.

**Protection from Arbitrary Detention** : The judgment strengthens safeguards against indefinite incarceration based solely on preliminary accusations.

**Prison Rights Concerns** : Long undertrial detention raises concerns relating to dignity, mental health, and prison overcrowding.

#### Internal Security Dimensions

**National Security Concerns** : UAPA was enacted to combat terrorism, separatism, and unlawful activities threatening national integrity.

**Balancing Security and Liberty** : The judgment seeks to balance legitimate state security concerns with constitutional protections against misuse of anti-terror laws.

**Risk of Preventive Punishment** : Extended denial of bail can transform preventive detention into de facto punishment without judicial determination of guilt.

#### Challenges & Concerns

**Misuse Allegations** : Critics argue that stringent anti-terror provisions may sometimes be invoked against dissenters and activists.

**Delayed Trials** : Complex investigations and large conspiracy cases often result in years-long incarceration before completion of trial.

**Security-Liberty Dilemma** : Courts face difficulty in balancing civil liberties with state obligations to prevent terrorism and maintain public order.

#### Way Forward

**Time-Bound Trials** : Fast-track mechanisms for UAPA cases can reduce prolonged undertrial incarceration.

**Periodic Bail Review** : Courts may institutionalise periodic review of continued detention in long-pending terror cases.

**Stronger Judicial Scrutiny** : Constitutional courts should continue applying proportionality and due process standards in national security legislation.

**Prison & Procedural Reforms** : Broader criminal justice reforms are required to address delays, undertrial overcrowding, and investigative inefficiencies.

### PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. Consider the following statements: (2023)

1. According to the Constitution of India, the Central Government has a duty to protect States from internal disturbances.

2. The Constitution of India exempts the States from providing legal counsel to person being held for preventive detention

3. According to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, 2002, confession of the accused before the police cannot be used as evidence. How many of the above statements are correct?

(a) Only one (b) Only two (c) All three (d) None

### STATIC CORE LINKAGE

**Bail** : Temporary release of an accused pending trial while ensuring appearance before court.

**Undertrial Prisoner** : A person detained during investigation or trial before conviction.

**Presumption of Innocence** : Legal principle that an accused is innocent until proven guilty.

**UAPA** : India's primary anti-terror law dealing with unlawful and terrorist activities.

**Prima Facie Standard** : Initial threshold where accusations appear credible on first examination.

**Article 21** : Guarantees right to life and personal liberty, including speedy trial.

**Article 14** : Ensures equality before law and protection against arbitrariness.

**Section 43D(5), UAPA** : Makes grant of bail difficult if accusations appear prima facie true.

### RELEVANCE

**GS II** : Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

## India's labour market shows gains, but challenges persist

The latest Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2025 highlights improving employment indicators in India, including rising labour force participation, declining unemployment, growing female workforce participation, and an increase in regular salaried employment. At the same time, the data reveals persistent structural challenges such as skill gaps, gender disparities, weak education-to-employment transitions, and a large NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) population that could affect India's ability to fully harness its demographic dividend.

### PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. Disguised unemployment generally means (2013)

- large number of people remain unemployed
- alternative employment is not available
- marginal productivity of labour is zero
- productivity of workers is low

### STATIC CORE LINKAGE

**Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)** : Percentage of population working or seeking work

**Workforce Participation Rate (WPR)** : Percentage of population actually employed

**Unemployment Rate** : Percentage of labour force actively seeking but not getting work

**Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET)** : Individuals not in employment, education, or training

**Demographic Dividend** : Economic growth potential due to large working-age population

### Indicator Latest Status

**Labour Force Participation Rate** : 59%

**Workforce Participation Rate** : 57%

**Unemployment Rate** : 3%

**Agriculture Employment Share** : 43%

**Manufacturing Employment Share** : ~12%

**Services Employment Share** : ~13%



### 360° MAINS ANALYSIS

#### Positive Trends in Labour Participation

**Declining Unemployment** : The unemployment rate has declined, indicating improving labour-market absorption.

**Rising Labour Force Participation** : India's labour force participation has shown measurable improvement across both rural and urban regions.

**Growth in Women's Workforce Participation** : Female labour-force participation, especially in rural areas, has improved steadily through successive survey rounds.

**Expansion of Regular Salaried Employment** : The share of regular wage and salaried employment has increased, indicating gradual formalisation of employment.

**Shift Away from Self-Employment** : The decline in self-employment suggests movement toward more stable and protected forms of employment.

**Rising Female Earnings** : Women's earnings have increased across salaried work, self-employment, and casual labour categories.

#### NEET Population Concerns

**Large Youth Disengagement** : Around one-fourth of individuals aged 15–29 fall into the NEET category.

**Hidden Employment Challenge** : NEET individuals are not fully reflected in unemployment statistics despite economic disengagement.

**Long-Term Productivity Risks** : Extended labour-market detachment can reduce future employability and productivity.

**Need for Early Intervention** : Apprenticeships, training, and counselling programmes are critical to re-engage NEET youth.

#### Structural Transformation of Employment

**Declining Dependence on Agriculture** : Agriculture's share in employment has gradually reduced, reflecting structural economic transformation.

**Growth of Manufacturing and Services** : Manufacturing and services sectors are increasingly absorbing younger workers and women.

**Rising Social Mobility** : Occupational segregation based on caste and gender has reduced among younger generations.

**Education Expansion Effects** : Greater access to education is gradually improving labour-market inclusiveness and occupational mobility.

#### Skill and Employment Challenges

**Weak Education-to-Employment Transition** : The number of graduates entering the labour market continues to exceed available employment opportunities.

**Low Formal Skill Training Coverage** : Only a small proportion of the workforce has received formal vocational or technical training.

**Skills and Employability Link** : Individuals with formal skills training show significantly higher workforce participation rates.

**Industry-Relevant Skill Gap** : Mismatch between educational qualifications and industry requirements affects employability.

### RELEVANCE

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

## Minimum temperatures are rising faster than maximum

India witnessed widespread heat conditions during April 2026, with several regions recording temperatures above 40°C. However, a significant climatic trend observed by the India Meteorological Department was that minimum temperatures (night-time temperatures) increased faster than maximum daytime temperatures across many regions. The phenomenon is important because warmer nights reduce human and ecological recovery from daytime heat, intensify heat stress, affect crop productivity, and indicate broader climate change-driven warming patterns.

### 360° MAINS ANALYSIS



#### Climatic Dimensions

**Faster Rise in Minimum Temperatures** : Night-time temperatures are increasing faster than daytime temperatures in several regions, indicating changing warming patterns associated with climate change.

**Reduced Nocturnal Cooling** : Warmer nights reduce the atmosphere's ability to dissipate accumulated daytime heat, intensifying overall thermal stress.

**Regional Variability** : Central, western, and northern India showed relatively normal maximum temperatures while minimum temperatures deviated sharply upward.

#### Environmental Dimensions

**Heat Stress Accumulation** : Continuous high temperatures during both day and night reduce recovery periods for ecosystems and human populations.

**Agricultural Impact** : Higher night-time temperatures force crops to consume stored energy through respiration, potentially reducing yields and stunting growth.

**Urban Heat Island Intensification** : Dense urbanisation, concrete surfaces, and reduced green cover contribute to elevated night-time temperatures in cities.

#### Human Health Dimensions

**Physiological Stress** : Lack of cooler nights prevents adequate body recovery, increasing risks of dehydration, heat exhaustion, and cardiovascular stress.

**Vulnerable Population Exposure** : Outdoor workers, elderly populations, urban poor, and slum dwellers face disproportionate exposure to prolonged heat conditions.

**Reduced Sleep Quality** : Persistently warm nights negatively affect sleep patterns, productivity, and mental well-being.

#### Disaster Management Dimensions

**Emerging Heatwave Risks** : Traditional heatwave assessment based mainly on daytime maximum temperatures may underestimate actual human discomfort and risk.

**Need for Heat Action Plans** : Cities and States require adaptive heat management strategies that incorporate night-time temperature trends.

**Early Warning Systems** : Improved localised forecasting and public advisories are necessary to reduce heat-related mortality and morbidity.

#### Economic Dimensions

**Agricultural Productivity Risks** : Persistent warm nights may lower crop yields, particularly in temperature-sensitive crops such as wheat and rice.

**Energy Demand Increase** : Warmer nights increase demand for cooling systems and electricity consumption, especially in urban areas.

**Labour Productivity Loss** : Extended heat exposure reduces worker efficiency and increases economic losses in outdoor sectors.

### PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. Bring out the causes for the formation of heat islands in the urban habitat of the world. (GS I - 2013)

Q. Consider the following statements: (2023)

Statement-I : The temperature contrast between continents and oceans is greater during summer than in winter.

Statement-II : The specific heat of water is more than that of land surface.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I
- Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I
- Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect
- Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct

### STATIC CORE LINKAGE

**Maximum Temperature** : Highest temperature recorded during a 24-hour period, usually during daytime.

**Minimum Temperature** : Lowest temperature recorded during a 24-hour period, generally at night or early morning.

**Heat Stress** : Physiological stress caused when the body cannot effectively cool itself.

**Long Period Average (LPA)** : Average climatic values calculated over a standard 30-year period.

**Urban Heat Island Effect** : Urban areas becoming warmer than surrounding rural areas due to concrete surfaces and human activity.

**Greenhouse Effect** : Increased greenhouse gases trap outgoing heat, including night-time heat.

**Thermal Retention** : Urban surfaces absorb and slowly release heat during night.

**Evapotranspiration Stress** : High night temperatures reduce plant recovery and productivity.

### RELEVANCE

**GS I** : Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc.

## Future shock

Indian corporates reported strong revenue and profit growth in Q4 FY26 despite foreign investor sell-offs and global uncertainty. However, the ongoing conflict in West Asia has raised concerns regarding rising crude oil prices, supply chain disruptions, inflationary pressures, and margin compression for FY27. The issue highlights India's vulnerability to external energy shocks and their impact on corporate profitability, inflation, investment, and economic growth.

### STATIC CORE LINKAGE

**Operating Profit Margin (OPM)** - Ratio showing profitability after operational expenses but before taxes and interest.

**Interest Coverage Ratio** - Indicates a company's ability to pay interest obligations from earnings.

**Supply Chain Disruption** - Disturbance in global movement of goods, inputs, and energy resources.

### PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. ) If another global financial crisis happens in the near future, which of the following actions/policies are most likely to give some immunity to India? (2020)

1. Not depending on short-term foreign borrowings
  2. Opening up to more foreign banks
  3. Maintaining full capital account convertibility
- Select the correct answer using the code given below:
- a) 1 only
  - b) 1 and 2 only
  - c) 3 only
  - d) 1, 2 and 3

### Economic Dimensions

**Strong Q4 Corporate Performance** - Indian corporates reported robust revenue and profit growth in Q4 FY26, indicating resilient domestic demand and post-pandemic economic recovery.

**Consumption Recovery** - Urban and rural consumption improved simultaneously due to GST cuts and rising discretionary spending in automobiles, real estate, retail, and financial services.

**Investment Signals** - Revenue growth in railways, power equipment, and electrical goods reflected selective revival in investment activity and infrastructure demand.

**Margin Pressures** - Rising crude oil, chemical, and metal prices due to the West Asia conflict are expected to compress operating margins in FY27.

**Inflationary Risks** - Higher fuel and logistics costs may increase retail inflation and reduce consumer purchasing power.

**Interest Rate Concerns** - Persistent inflation could compel the RBI to raise policy rates, thereby increasing borrowing costs and weakening investment demand.

### Way Forward

**Energy Diversification** - India must accelerate diversification of crude import sources and expand renewable energy capacity.

**Strategic Petroleum Reserves** - Strengthening strategic oil reserves can reduce short-term vulnerability to global shocks.

**Domestic Manufacturing Push** - Enhancing domestic manufacturing and logistics resilience can reduce dependence on external supply chains.

**Inflation Management** - Coordinated fiscal and monetary measures are necessary to balance inflation control with growth objectives.

**Corporate Resilience** - Firms must improve supply-chain diversification, energy efficiency, and risk management mechanisms.

### International Dimensions

#### **West Asia Dependency**

- India's high dependence on West Asian crude imports exposes the economy to geopolitical instability and supply disruptions.

#### **Strait of Hormuz Vulnerability**

- Any blockade or disruption in the Strait of Hormuz can severely affect global oil supply chains and India's energy imports.

#### **Global Trade Disruptions**

- War-related disruptions can weaken exports, increase freight costs, and affect international investment flows into emerging economies.

### Sectoral Impacts

**Airlines** : High aviation fuel costs may reduce profitability.

**Chemicals** : Rising crude derivatives increase input costs.

**Fertilisers** : Higher gas and energy prices raise subsidy burdens.

**Restaurants** : Increased fuel and production costs reduce margins.

**Oil Marketing Companies** : Elevated crude prices increase under-recovery risks.

**Textiles** : Higher energy and logistics costs affect competitiveness.

### RELEVANCE

**GS III : Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.**

## Waiting for the storm

Severe pre-monsoon thunderstorms, dust storms, lightning, and thunder squalls struck multiple districts of Uttar Pradesh in May 2026, causing over 100 deaths and extensive damage. The event highlighted the increasing intensity of convective weather systems, vulnerabilities in housing and infrastructure, and limitations in last-mile disaster warning dissemination despite alerts issued by the India Meteorological Department and the Integrated Alert System (SACHET). The incident underlines the growing importance of climate-resilient infrastructure and effective disaster risk communication.

### STATIC CORE LINKAGE

**Thunderstorm** - A convective weather phenomenon associated with lightning, thunder, gusty winds, and heavy rainfall.

**Andhi** - Local term used in north India for intense pre-monsoon dust storms accompanied by thunderstorms.

**Western Disturbance** - Eastward-moving extra-tropical weather system originating near the Mediterranean region that brings rainfall to north India.

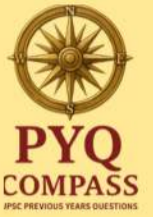
**Convective Instability** - Atmospheric condition where warm moist air rises rapidly beneath cooler dry air, triggering thunderstorms.

**Cell Broadcast Technology** - Technology that sends emergency alerts simultaneously to all mobile devices within a geo-targeted area.

**Integrated Alert System (SACHET)** - SACHET enables geo-targeted dissemination of disaster alerts through SMS across all States and Union Territories.

### PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



- Q.) Consider the following statements: (2015)
1. The winds which blow between 30° N and 60° S latitudes through-out the year are known as westerlies.
  2. The moist air masses that cause winter rains in North-Western region of India are part of Westerlies.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- a) 1 only
  - b) 2 only
  - c) Both 1 and 2
  - d) Neither 1 nor 2
- Q. Discuss the recent measures initiated in disaster management by the Government of India departing from the earlier reactive approach. (2020)



### 360° MAINS ANALYSIS

#### Driving Factors

**Atmospheric Instability** - Extreme surface heating combined with moisture-laden southeasterly winds and cooler upper air created strong convective instability conducive to severe thunderstorms.

**Western Disturbance Trigger** - Active western disturbances intensified atmospheric instability and enhanced thunderstorm development over northern India.

**Geographic Convergence** - Uttar Pradesh frequently experiences convergence between dry 'loo' winds from the Thar region and moist Bay of Bengal winds, increasing thunderstorm susceptibility.

**Topographic Influence** - The undulating terrain of the Vindhya region accelerated rapid uplift of air masses, contributing to localized intense storms.

#### Way Forward

**Hyperlocal Forecasting** - Improving district- and block-level forecasting accuracy can strengthen preparedness for localized extreme weather events.

**Community-Based Preparedness** - Public awareness campaigns must include actionable safety instructions alongside weather alerts.

**Climate-Resilient Infrastructure** - Strengthening housing standards, electric infrastructure, and public installations can reduce disaster vulnerability.

**Integrated Warning Ecosystem** - Wider deployment of Cell Broadcast technology can improve rapid and reliable emergency communication.

**Institutional Capacity Building** - Continuous investment in meteorological observation systems and AI-assisted forecasting can enhance predictive capability.

#### Disaster Management Dimensions

**Early Warning Capability** - IMD successfully issued advance thunderstorm alerts using dense observation networks and nowcasting systems.

**Last-Mile Communication Gap** - Large-scale dissemination of alerts through the SACHET portal did not necessarily ensure timely comprehension or behavioural response at the community level.

**Forecasting Limitation** - While thunderstorms were predicted, actual wind intensity exceeded forecast estimates in several districts.

**Non-Evacuation Challenge** - Unlike cyclones, thunderstorms are highly localized and dispersed, making mass evacuation impractical.

**Integrated Alert System (SACHET)** - SACHET enables geo-targeted dissemination of disaster alerts through SMS across all States and Union Territories.

## RELEVANCE

**GS I : Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami cyclone etc.**

**GS III : Disaster and disaster management.**

## On Saranda forests, Jharkhand must heed SC

The Supreme Court of India directed the Jharkhand government to notify around 314 sq. km of the Saranda Forest as a Wildlife Sanctuary to strengthen protection against ecological degradation and illegal mining. However, delays in notification, concerns regarding tribal rights, and attempts to reduce the proposed sanctuary area have reignited debates on conservation, mining, indigenous livelihoods, and executive implementation of environmental safeguards. The issue highlights the challenge of balancing ecological security with developmental and community concerns.

### STATIC CORE LINKAGE

**Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS)** : Protected area notified under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for wildlife conservation.

**Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ)** : Buffer area around protected areas regulated to minimize ecological damage.

**Elephant Corridor** : Ecological pathway used by elephants for seasonal and migratory movement.

**Sal Forest** : Tropical moist deciduous forest dominated by Sal (*Shorea robusta*).

**SLOSS Debate** : Conservation principle debating "Single Large or Several Small" protected habitats.

**Conservation Reserve** : Protected area designated for landscape and habitat conservation involving local participation.

### PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q.) The most important strategy for the conservation of biodiversity together with traditional human life is the establishment of: (2014)

- biosphere reserves
- botanical gardens
- national parks
- wildlife sanctuaries

Q. Consider the following statements: (2018)

- The definition of "Critical Wildlife Habitat" is incorporated in the Forest Rights Act, 2006.
- For the first time in India, Baigas have been given Habitat Rights.
- Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change officially decides and declares Habitat Rights for Primitive and Vulnerable Tribal Groups in any part of India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only    b) 2 and 3 only    c) 3 only    d) 1, 2 and 3



### 360° MAINS ANALYSIS

#### Environmental Dimensions

**Biodiversity Importance** : Saranda supports rich biodiversity and serves as a critical habitat for elephants and other wildlife species.

**Habitat Fragmentation** : Extensive mining activity has fragmented forest landscapes and disrupted elephant migratory routes.

**Human-Animal Conflict** : Ecological degradation has increased elephant movement through settlements, intensifying human-elephant conflicts.

**Watershed and Climate Role** : Forest degradation weakens watershed systems, accelerates soil erosion, and reduces local climate resilience.

#### Governance Dimensions

**Delayed Implementation** : Delays in notifying the sanctuary reflect implementation gaps between judicial directives and executive action.

**Conservation Planning** : Scientific studies by WII recommended no-go conservation zones to preserve ecological integrity.

**Multi-Stakeholder Coordination** : Effective conservation requires coordination among governments, local communities, courts, scientists, and industry stakeholders.

#### Tribal and Social Dimensions

**Forest Rights Concerns** : Tribal communities expressed concerns that sanctuary notification may affect traditional access to forests and livelihoods.

**FRA Safeguards** : The Supreme Court clarified that rights under the Forest Rights Act would remain protected despite sanctuary declaration.

**Participatory Conservation** : Inclusive conservation involving local communities is essential for long-term ecological sustainability and social legitimacy.

#### Economic Dimensions

**Mining-Development Conflict** : Iron ore mining contributes to regional economic activity but has generated long-term ecological costs.

**Sustainable Livelihoods** : Ecological degradation threatens agriculture, water security, and forest-dependent livelihoods.

**Ecological Security** : Long-term environmental protection can reduce disaster vulnerability and sustain ecosystem services.

#### Challenges

**Balancing Conservation and Livelihoods** : Reconciling biodiversity protection with tribal rights and developmental aspirations remains complex.

**Mining Pressures** : Existing and proposed mining activities continue to exert pressure on ecologically sensitive areas.

**Administrative Delays** : Delayed notifications and review petitions can weaken conservation outcomes.

**Fragmented Habitats** : Reduction in protected area extent may undermine ecological continuity essential for elephant conservation.

### RELEVANCE

**GS III : Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.**

## The Iran war, India's strategic autonomy challenges

The ongoing West Asian conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran has intensified concerns regarding India's strategic autonomy, energy security, and geopolitical balancing. While India has recently strengthened ties with Europe through defence and trade agreements, evolving global power rivalries and increasing economic and military unilateralism by major powers are creating fresh challenges for India's independent foreign policy approach and multipolar engagement strategy.

### STATIC CORE LINKAGE

**Strategic Autonomy** : Ability of a country to pursue independent foreign policy decisions .

**Multipolarity** : International system with multiple centres of power

**Geoeconomics** : Use of economic instruments for geopolitical objectives

**Unipolarity** : Dominance of a single global power

**De-dollarisation** : Reducing dependence on the U.S. dollar in international trade

### India's evolving strategic partnerships

**Indo-Pacific & Geopolitical Cooperation** : India and the U.S. share concerns over Indo-Pacific security, maritime stability, and China's rise, leading to stronger strategic ties.

**Economic & Trade Partnerships** : The U.S. is one of India's largest trading partners while the India-EU FTA aims to expand trade, diversify markets, and reduce protectionist risks.

**Global forums** : India continues to pursue strategic autonomy through ties with Russia, Iran, and BRICS.

**Defence & Technology Cooperation** :The Rafale deal (france) reflects India's effort to diversify defence partnerships.

### Multipolarity and Global Order

**India's Support for Multipolarity** : India advocates a balanced international system with multiple centres of power.

**Persistence of U.S. Dominance** : Recent geopolitical developments indicate continued American influence over global security and finance.

**Emerging Geoeconomic Blocs** : Global trade and technology systems are increasingly shaped by strategic alignments.

**Position of the Global South** : Developing countries risk becoming arenas of competition among major powers.

### PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. Is there still a role for the concept of balance of power in contemporary international politics ? Discuss. (GS II - International Relations - 2011)

Q. How have the US sanctions against Iran affected India's bilateral relations with Iran? (GS II - International Relations - 2012)

Q. In what ways would the ongoing US-Iran Nuclear Pact Controversy affect the national interest of India? How should India respond to its situation? (GS II - International Relations - 2018)

### 360° MAINS ANALYSIS

#### Strategic Autonomy and Foreign Policy

**India's Multi-Alignment Strategy** : India has historically maintained balanced relations with competing global powers without entering formal alliances.

**Independent Decision-Making** : Strategic autonomy allows India to pursue national interests without excessive external dependence.

**Growing External Pressures** : Major powers increasingly expect geopolitical alignment alongside economic cooperation.

**Challenges to Policy Flexibility** : Rising geopolitical polarisation is narrowing diplomatic space for middle powers such as India.

#### West Asian Conflict and India

**Energy Security Concerns** : Instability in West Asia directly affects India's oil imports, energy prices, and economic stability.

**Importance of Iran** : Iran remains strategically important for India due to connectivity projects and energy interests.

**Strait of Hormuz Vulnerability** : Disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz threaten global energy supply chains and India's import security.

**Regional Security Risks** : Escalating conflict can increase maritime insecurity and disrupt trade routes.

#### Geoeconomic Dimensions

**Economic Nationalism in Global Politics** : Trade, tariffs, sanctions, and technology controls are increasingly used as strategic tools.

**Changing Nature of Globalisation** : Economic relations are becoming more linked to geopolitical and security considerations.

**Pressure on Emerging Economies** : Countries may face pressure to align trade and investment policies with major power interests.

**Limits of Economic Diversification** : Even diversified partnerships may not fully shield countries from global geopolitical shocks.

#### Challenges to India's Strategic Autonomy

**Dependence on Imported Energy** : Energy vulnerability constrains diplomatic and strategic flexibility.

**Global Financial Dependence** : Dollar dominance continues to influence trade and sanctions regimes.

**Technology Dependence** : Critical defence and technology sectors remain externally dependent.

**Geopolitical Polarisation** : Intensifying global rivalry reduces policy space for non-aligned engagement.

## RELEVANCE

**GS II : Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.**

## Modi meets Norwegian PM as they seek to raise ties to Green Strategic Partnership

India and Norway upgraded bilateral relations to a "Green Strategic Partnership" during the visit of Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Støre. The partnership focuses on **green energy, maritime cooperation, technology, scientific research, trade, and sustainable development** amid rising geopolitical tensions, protectionism, and energy insecurity. Several agreements were signed in areas such as **offshore wind energy, ocean sciences, digital public infrastructure, healthcare, and triangular development cooperation for the Global South.**

### STATIC CORE LINKAGE

**Strategic Partnership** : Bilateral cooperation framework focused on sustainability, renewable energy, green technologies, and climate goals.

**Blue Economy** : Sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, livelihoods, and ecosystem health.

**Offshore Wind Energy** : Wind-generated electricity produced through turbines installed in ocean waters.

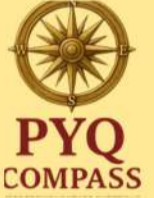
**Circular Economy** : Economic model emphasizing reuse, recycling, and minimization of waste.

**Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS)** : Technology used to capture and store carbon dioxide emissions to reduce climate impact.

**Levelized Cost of Energy (LCOE)** : Average cost of energy generation over the lifetime of an energy asset.

### PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. ) Clean energy is the order of the day.' Describe briefly India's changing policy towards climate change in various international fora in the context of geopolitics. (GS II - 2022)

Q.) The question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyze India's energy policy cooperation with West Asian Countries. (GS II - 2017)



## 360° MAINS ANALYSIS

### International Relations Dimensions

**Rules-Based Order** : India and Norway emphasized support for dialogue, diplomacy, and adherence to a rules-based international order amid geopolitical instability.

**Strategic Diversification** : Norway seeks deeper engagement with India as part of broader economic and geopolitical diversification beyond traditional Western markets.

**Global South Cooperation** : The triangular development partnership reflects growing collaboration in supporting sustainable development in Global South countries.

**Geopolitical Context** : Discussions on Ukraine, West Asia, energy security, and protectionism underline the impact of geopolitical conflicts on global cooperation.

### Economic Dimensions

**Green Investment Opportunities** : The Green Strategic Partnership aims to combine India's market scale with Norwegian capital and technological expertise.

**Trade Expansion** : Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) is expected to increase investment flows, industrial collaboration, and employment generation in India.

**Energy Security** : Cooperation in offshore wind and alternative energy sources can reduce dependence on volatile fossil fuel supply chains.

**Innovation Ecosystem** : Joint R&D programmes can strengthen industrial competitiveness and startup ecosystems in emerging technologies.

### Technological Dimensions

**Renewable Energy Collaboration** : Joint work on offshore wind and ocean energy technologies supports India's renewable energy transition goals.

**Carbon Neutrality Goals** : Cooperation in carbon capture and sustainability technologies aligns with long-term decarbonization objectives.

**Scientific Research Networks** : Academic and institutional partnerships facilitate knowledge transfer, innovation, and scientific capacity building.

**Digital Cooperation** : Collaboration in digital public infrastructure expands technological interoperability and governance innovation.

### Environmental Dimensions

**Sustainable Development** : The partnership prioritizes green technologies and sustainability-oriented economic growth.

**Ocean Governance** : Cooperation in blue economy sectors promotes sustainable utilization of marine resources.

**Circular Economy Transition** : Joint research in recycling, waste valorization, and bio-based materials supports resource efficiency.

### Way Forward

**Deepening Green Technology Partnerships** : India and Norway should accelerate joint research and commercialization in renewable and low-carbon technologies.

**Strengthening Maritime Cooperation** : Enhanced collaboration in shipping, ocean governance, and Arctic research can broaden strategic engagement.

**Expanding Academic Exchanges** : Greater mobility of students, scientists, and researchers can deepen long-term institutional linkages.

**Enhancing Energy Resilience** : Diversified energy partnerships and renewable infrastructure investments can strengthen energy security.

**Promoting Inclusive Global Governance** : Both countries can collaborate in shaping equitable and sustainable global governance frameworks.

### RELEVANCE

**GS II** : *Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.*

## The warning signs in India's import bill

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently urged citizens to reduce consumption of imported commodities such as petroleum products, edible oils, and gold, while promoting public transport, electric vehicles, and domestic products. The appeal comes amid a record merchandise trade deficit, rising import dependence, pressure on foreign exchange reserves, and volatility in global energy markets due to geopolitical conflicts in West Asia. The issue highlights India's structural external sector vulnerabilities and the challenge of balancing growth, consumption, and economic resilience.

### STATIC CORE LINKAGE

**Trade Deficit** : Situation where imports exceed exports in merchandise trade.

**Current Account Deficit (CAD)** : Excess of imports of goods, services, and transfers over exports.

**Foreign Exchange Reserves** : Foreign currency assets held by the RBI to manage external sector stability.

**Rupee Depreciation** : Decline in the value of the rupee relative to foreign currencies.

**PLI Scheme** : Production Linked Incentive scheme aimed at boosting domestic manufacturing.

**Gold ETF** : Exchange Traded Fund linked to gold prices without physical ownership.

### PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. What are the challenges before the Indian economy when the world is moving away from free trade and multilateralism to protectionism and bilateralism? How can these challenges be met? (GS III - 2025)

Q. How would the recent phenomena of protectionism and currency manipulations in world trade affect macroeconomic stability of India? (GS III - 2018)

Q. Craze for gold in Indians has led to a surge in import of gold in recent years and put pressure on balance of payments and external value of rupee. In view of this, examine the merits of Gold Monetization Scheme. (GS III - 2015)



### 360° MAINS ANALYSIS

#### Economic Dimensions

**Rising Trade Deficit** : India's merchandise trade deficit widened sharply due to stagnant exports and rising imports.

**Pressure on Forex Reserves** : Sustained RBI interventions to stabilize the rupee have contributed to declining foreign exchange reserves.

**Rupee Depreciation** : A weakening rupee increases import costs and may worsen inflationary pressures.

**Import-Led Consumption** : Growing demand for gold, electronics, and edible oils has increased external sector vulnerability.

**Fertilizer Subsidy Burden** : Rising global fertilizer prices may significantly increase government subsidy expenditure.

#### External Sector Dimensions

**Oil Price Vulnerability** : India's dependence on imported crude oil exposes the economy to geopolitical disruptions and energy price shocks.

**Global Geopolitical Risks** : Conflicts in West Asia and disruptions in shipping routes can adversely affect trade and supply chains.

**Capital Flow Sensitivity** ; Persistent external imbalances can reduce investor confidence and increase currency volatility.

#### Challenges

**Structural Import Dependence** : India remains dependent on imports in energy, fertilizers, electronics, and edible oils.

**Export Stagnation** : Slow export growth limits the country's ability to offset rising imports.

**Global Uncertainty** : Geopolitical tensions and commodity price volatility complicate macroeconomic management.

**Limited Domestic Capacity** : Domestic manufacturing and agricultural productivity improvements remain uneven across sectors.

#### Way Forward

**Strengthening Domestic Manufacturing** : India should deepen industrial capacity building in electronics, semiconductors, batteries, and renewable technologies.

**Enhancing Export Competitiveness** : Policies should focus on logistics efficiency, trade facilitation, and integration into global supply chains.

**Reducing Energy Dependence** : Expansion of renewable energy and electric mobility can gradually reduce crude oil imports.

**Agricultural Diversification** : Increased investment in oilseed production and fertilizer self-sufficiency can improve external resilience.

**Prudential Forex Management** : RBI interventions should balance exchange rate stability with preservation of reserve adequacy.

**Promoting Financial Diversification** : Expanding secure domestic financial instruments may reduce excessive household dependence on gold.

## RELEVANCE

**GS III : Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.**