



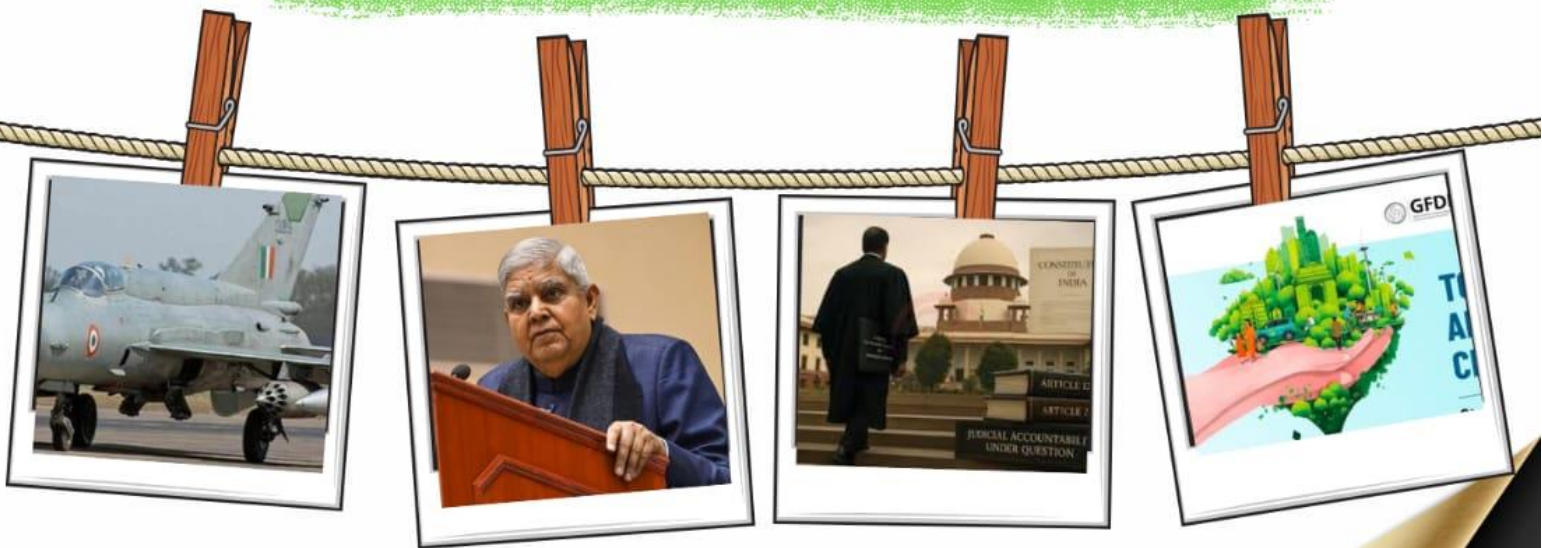
# Weekly Current Affairs



## To The Point

by Dhananjay Gautam

21 to 27 July 2025



Subscribe to our



Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 2 – Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice

## Judicial Accountability Under Scrutiny: Debate Over In-House Inquiry Mechanism

**Context:** In a significant development, the **Chief Justice of India (CJI)** has agreed to constitute a special Bench to hear a petition filed on behalf of **Justice Yashwant Varma** of the **Allahabad High Court**, raising questions about the **constitutional validity** of the judiciary's **in-house inquiry mechanism**. This petition could redefine the contours of **judicial accountability** and the **doctrine of separation of powers** in India.



### Background: Allegations and a Constitutional Crisis

In **March 2025**, unaccounted cash was allegedly recovered from Justice Varma's residence. Following this, an **in-house committee** recommended his removal **without granting a personal hearing**. After refusing to resign, proceedings for his **impeachment** were initiated in **Parliament**, sparking intense debate over the **independence of the judiciary** and the **limits of internal oversight**.

### Understanding the In-House Procedure for Judges:

The **in-house mechanism**, introduced in **1999** by the **Supreme Court**, was aimed at dealing with complaints of judicial misconduct **without resorting to the formal impeachment process**. Here's how it works:

- **Filing of Complaints:** Complaints may be submitted to the **Chief Justice of India**, the **Chief Justice of a High Court**, or directly to the **President of India**.
- **Preliminary Examination:** The **High Court Chief Justice** seeks a response from the accused judge and forwards the findings to the CJI.
- **Fact-Finding Committee:** Upon finding prima facie merit, the **CJI appoints a committee** consisting of two Chief Justices of other High Courts and one High Court judge.
- **Outcome and Recommendation:** If the committee finds sufficient grounds for removal, the CJI may advise resignation. Upon refusal, the findings are forwarded to the **President and Prime Minister**, potentially triggering **parliamentary impeachment**.

### Key Legal and Constitutional Issues Raised:

Justice Varma's petition highlights several serious concerns:

1. **Lack of Constitutional Backing:** The **in-house procedure** is **not grounded in the Constitution or any statute**, making it vulnerable to challenge. Articles **124(4)** (for Supreme Court judges) and **218** (for High Court judges) provide for removal **only through parliamentary procedure**, implying that internal mechanisms may lack legitimacy.
2. **Violation of Natural Justice:** The petition argues that **no personal hearing** was granted, and the accused judge was **denied access to the full report** and the evidence. This undermines the **right to fair trial and due process**, guaranteed under **Articles 14 (equality before law)** and **21 (right to life and liberty)**.
3. **Breach of Separation of Powers:** Critics argue that by conducting disciplinary proceedings internally, the **judiciary is encroaching on Parliament's exclusive domain**—a violation of the **separation of powers**, a basic structure of the Constitution.

### Wider Implications and the Road Ahead:

Need for Institutional Reform

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

2



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



There is an urgent need to **codify judicial conduct mechanisms** within a **legislative framework**—possibly through an updated version of the **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968**, with provisions for **transparency, fairness, and appeal**.

## Balancing Judicial Independence and Accountability:

Judicial independence must **not be equated with immunity**. Judges must be held to the **highest ethical standards**, but **disciplinary mechanisms must ensure procedural fairness** and avoid becoming tools of internal bias or executive influence.

## Comparative Perspective: Global Practices

- In the **United States**, judges can be investigated by **Judicial Councils** but only removed through **Congressional impeachment**.
- The **UK** uses a formal complaint mechanism under the **Judicial Conduct Investigations Office (JCIO)**, ensuring **independent review and procedural transparency**.
- Several **European countries**, like **Germany** and **France**, have codified procedures for disciplining judges through **independent bodies** with **judicial and administrative members**.

## Conclusion: Towards Transparent Judicial Ethics

This case could become a watershed moment for judicial reform in India. As public trust in institutions is crucial, the **judiciary must not only be impartial but appear to be so**. Strengthening **external oversight**, ensuring **due process**, and codifying **judicial discipline** are vital steps toward a **robust, accountable, and independent judiciary**.

freedom UPSC  
TOGETHER WE SCALE HEIGHTS

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

3





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 3 – Economy

## Sharp Decline in Net FDI Raises Concerns Over Investment Sentiment in India

**Context:** India witnessed a **staggering drop of 98.2%** in **Net Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** during **May 2025**, with inflows plunging to just **\$40 million**, compared to **\$2.2 billion** recorded in **May 2024**. While gross FDI inflows remained relatively resilient at **\$7.2 billion**, they too saw a slight dip from **\$8.1 billion** year-on-year, reflecting an evolving investment landscape.



### Understanding Net FDI: A Key Economic Indicator

**Net FDI** refers to the **net inflow of foreign capital** into the country, calculated by subtracting **outflows** (such as **profit repatriation**, **divestments**, and **outward FDI** by Indian firms) from **gross inflows**. It represents the **real addition of foreign investment** to the domestic economy and serves as a barometer of **long-term investor confidence**.

### Why the Sudden Decline? Key Drivers Behind the FDI Slowdown

Several factors have contributed to this sharp fall in net FDI:

- **Increased Repatriation and Divestment:** Foreign investors **withdrew profits** or **sold their stakes**, reducing net inflows.
- **Higher Outward FDI by Indian Firms:** Indian companies have been **actively investing abroad**, which has added to the outflows.
- **Global Economic Uncertainty:** Geopolitical tensions, inflation, and tightening financial conditions in developed markets have **tempered investor risk appetite**.

### Top Sources and Sectors Attracting FDI:

Despite the drop in net inflows, India remains an attractive destination for long-term investment:

- **Major Source Countries:** **Singapore**, **Mauritius**, the **UAE**, and the **United States** accounted for over **75% of FDI inflows** in May 2025.
- **Leading Sectors:** The **manufacturing sector**, **financial services**, and **computer services** remained top performers in absorbing foreign capital.

### Implications of the Declining Net FDI:

1. **External Sector Vulnerability:** A sudden drop in net FDI can lead to **short-term pressure** on the **balance of payments** and affect the **exchange rate stability**, especially when accompanied by **portfolio outflows**.
2. **Liquidity Challenges for Key Sectors:** Sectors heavily reliant on FDI, such as **infrastructure**, **technology**, and **real estate**, may face **liquidity constraints** and slower **expansion plans** if this trend continues.
3. **Mixed Investor Sentiment:** While **gross inflows** remain strong, suggesting that **India's fundamentals are still attractive**, the rising repatriation signals a **more mature investment climate** where investors are **freely entering and exiting** the market.
4. **Strategic Repositioning by Investors:** The shift could also reflect **strategic realignment**, where investors choose to diversify portfolios geographically due to emerging risks in Asia or improved prospects in other regions.

Download Our Application



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

4



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



## Types of FDI: A Quick Overview:

Understanding the **forms of FDI** provides insight into the nature of foreign investments:

- **Horizontal FDI:** Replicating the same business in a foreign country.  
*Example:* McDonald's opening outlets in India.
- **Vertical FDI:** Investing in a different part of the supply chain.  
*Example:* A U.S. oil company investing in Indian petrol stations.
- **Conglomerate FDI:** Investing in an **unrelated sector** abroad.  
*Example:* A textile firm acquiring a fintech startup overseas.
- **Greenfield FDI:** Setting up **entirely new infrastructure** (e.g., a new manufacturing plant in India).
- **Brownfield FDI:** Acquiring or investing in **existing facilities**.  
*Example:* Foreign acquisition of an Indian pharmaceutical unit.

## Expert View: A Sign of Market Evolution?

According to the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, the uptick in repatriation may indicate a **maturing investment environment**, where foreign investors are now **more confident in managing capital exit**—a hallmark of an **open and stable economy**.

## Looking Ahead: Rebuilding Investor Momentum

To restore and enhance **net FDI performance**, India needs to:

- Ensure **policy consistency** and **regulatory clarity**.
- Accelerate **ease of doing business** reforms.
- Strengthen **bilateral investment treaties** (BITs) to protect investor rights.
- Foster long-term strategic partnerships in **emerging sectors** like **green energy**, **semiconductors**, and **digital infrastructure**.



## Syros Island in the Spotlight: Cruise Diverted Amid Political Protest

**Context:** A cruise liner carrying **Israeli tourists** was recently **diverted to Cyprus** after being denied docking at **Syros Island** due to a **quayside protest** linked to ongoing tensions over the **Gaza conflict**. The incident has drawn international attention, highlighting how global issues can impact even the most peaceful tourist destinations. The Greek government has yet to issue a formal statement, but local reports confirm the protest was non-violent and involved a small group of demonstrators.



### Discovering Syros: The Beating Heart of the Cyclades

**Syros** (also known as **Siros** or **Syra**) is a **picturesque island** nestled in the **Cyclades archipelago** in the **Aegean Sea**. Known for its blend of **classical elegance** and **island charm**, Syros stands out from the more commercial tourist hotspots like Mykonos and Santorini.

- Located approximately **78 nautical miles (144 km)** southeast of **Athens**, Syros spans a modest area of **83.6 square kilometers**.
- The island is **hilly and irregular in shape**, with its highest point reaching **442 meters (1,450 feet)** above sea level.
- As of the **2021 census**, the population stood at around **21,124 residents**.

### Major Towns: Where History Meets the Horizon

The **main city, Ermoupoli**, is a **hilltop settlement** with neoclassical architecture, cascading down to a picturesque port. It serves as:

- The **administrative capital of the Cyclades**.
- The **headquarters for the South Aegean region**.
- A vibrant hub of **culture, history, and governance**.

Other notable towns include **Ano Syros**, a traditional medieval settlement, and **Vari**, a seaside village known for its calm beaches and tavernas.

### What Makes Syros Special: Beyond the Postcards

While less flashy than other Aegean islands, Syros is treasured for its **authentic Greek lifestyle**, offering visitors:

- **Stunning beaches** like Galissas, Kini, and Delfini.
- **Cultural festivals**, especially the **Syros International Film Festival** and **Ermoupolia Festival**, celebrating music, theatre, and visual arts.
- A rich blend of **Orthodox and Catholic heritage**, evident in its architecture and religious landmarks.

### Economy of Syros: Anchored in Tradition and Trade

Syros boasts a **diverse economy** that combines traditional industries with maritime commerce:

- **Shipbuilding and repair** continue to thrive, especially around Ermoupoli's historic **Neorion Shipyards**.



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- Other industries include **tanning, textile production, weaving, and confectionery**, particularly the famous **Syros loukoumi** (Turkish delight).
- However, the **backbone of Syros's economy** is **maritime trade and commercial shipping**, thanks to its strategic location and robust port infrastructure.

## A Blend of Old-World Grace and Modern Vitality

Syros offers a unique contrast to Greece's more touristic islands. Its **noble charm, quiet sophistication, and resilient local culture** make it a hidden gem for travelers seeking **authenticity and rich history**. Though recent protests may have briefly stirred its calm waters, Syros remains a symbol of **civic expression and timeless beauty** in the Aegean.



[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

7





## Rare Bird Alert: Long-Billed Bush Warbler Spotted in India After 46 Years

**Context:** In an exciting breakthrough for birdwatchers and conservationists, a group of birders recently made the **first confirmed sighting in 46 years** of the **Long-Billed Bush Warbler** (*Locustella major*) in **India**. The elusive species, classified as **Near Threatened** by the IUCN, was observed in the remote **Suru Valley of Ladakh**, marking a monumental moment in Indian ornithological history.



### Meet the Long-Billed Bush Warbler: A Hidden Gem of the Highlands

The **Long-Billed Bush Warbler** is a **medium-sized songbird**, best known for its **extraordinarily elusive nature** and its preference for rugged, high-altitude landscapes.

- **Scientific Name:** *Locustella major*
- **Size:** Measures approximately **15–17 cm** in length.
- **Distinct Features:**
  - A **long bill** and **relatively long tail**
  - **Brownish-olive plumage** with fine streaks on the back
  - **Pale underparts**, ranging from **whitish to buff**
  - **Sexes appear similar**, making field identification challenging
- **Behavior:**
  - **Skulking and secretive**, often running through undergrowth rather than flying
  - Occasionally appears on low bushes to **sing**, producing a faint **clicking call**, likened to the soft buzz of a grasshopper.

### Natural Habitat: High-Altitude Hideouts

This rarely seen warbler is typically found in **mountainous regions of Central Asia**, with its range covering **parts of China, India, Pakistan, and Tajikistan**. It thrives in:

- **Grassy slopes** with scattered bushes and tall weeds
- **Terraced upland cultivation**
- **Alpine meadows and forest edges**, usually between **2,400 to 3,600 meters** in elevation

Its **camouflaged plumage** and preference for **dense vegetation** make sightings extremely rare, even within its known range.

### Conservation Status: A Species on the Edge

- **IUCN Red List: Near Threatened** This classification reflects its **small and fragmented population**, as well as the **ongoing loss of suitable habitat** due to overgrazing, land conversion, and changing alpine ecosystems under the pressure of climate change.

The recent sighting in India provides hope, but also underscores the urgent need for **habitat protection** and **long-term monitoring**.

### Why This Sighting Matters:

[Download Our Application](#)





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **Rediscovery After Decades:** The last confirmed record of the **Long-Billed Bush Warbler in India** dates back to **1979**, making this a **landmark rediscovery**.
- **New Avenues for Research:** The documentation of the species in Suru Valley opens doors to **deeper ecological studies**, potentially updating range maps and conservation priorities.
- **Boost for Bird Tourism and Citizen Science:** Ladakh's growing appeal among **birders and nature enthusiasts** could lead to greater investment in conservation efforts and eco-tourism infrastructure.

## Did You Know?

The **genus Locustella**, to which the Long-Billed Bush Warbler belongs, is named after the Latin word for "grasshopper" – a nod to the **insect-like calls** of many species in this group.

## Conclusion: A Call to Protect the Silent Singers

The return of the **Long-Billed Bush Warbler** to Indian skies is not just a thrilling ornithological event—it's a powerful reminder of nature's resilience and the mysteries that still lie hidden in the **Himalayan highlands**. As conservationists celebrate this rediscovery, it becomes crucial to ensure these fragile habitats remain safe for the birds that call them home.



[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

9



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 1 – Geography

## Cambodia Back in Focus: Border Dispute Sparks Fresh Tensions with Thailand

**Context:** Tensions have flared once again between **Cambodia and Thailand** over long-standing **territorial disputes**, with recent developments along the shared border igniting diplomatic and military concern. The dispute centers on claims near culturally and strategically significant areas, adding to the region's geopolitical sensitivities.



### Cambodia: A Key Nation in Mainland Southeast Asia

Situated in the heart of **Mainland Southeast Asia**, **Cambodia** holds a strategic position both politically and geographically.

- **Capital:** Phnom Penh
- **Regional Affiliation:** A prominent member of the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)**
- **Land Borders:** Shares boundaries with **Thailand** to the west and northwest, **Laos** to the north, and **Vietnam** to the east and southeast.
- **Maritime Border:** Faces the **Gulf of Thailand** to the south, giving it access to vital sea routes and economic zones.

### Geography of Cambodia: Rivers, Mountains, and More

Cambodia's diverse landscape blends **river systems**, **mountain ranges**, and **lowland plains**, playing a crucial role in its agriculture and biodiversity.

- **Major Rivers:**
  - The **Mekong River**, one of Asia's longest and most important rivers, flows through the country from north to south.
  - The **Tonle Sap River** connects the Mekong to **Tonle Sap Lake**, Southeast Asia's largest freshwater lake and a vital ecosystem for fisheries and flood regulation.
- **Mountain Ranges:**
  - **Dangrek Mountains** (forming the northern border with Thailand)
  - **Krâvanh Mountains** (also known as the **Cardamom Mountains**) in the southwest
  - **Dâmrei Mountains** (also called the **Elephant Mountains**) in the south-central region

These highlands are home to **dense tropical forests** and rich wildlife, including endangered species like the **Indochinese tiger** and **Asian elephants**.

### Strategic and Cultural Significance:

The Cambodia–Thailand border region includes **historically significant sites**, such as the **Preah Vihear Temple**, which has been at the center of past confrontations. The area holds both **cultural heritage** and **strategic value**, intensifying the stakes in any territorial disagreement.

### A Brief Historical Perspective:

- The **Preah Vihear dispute** has seen periodic military and legal battles, with the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)** ruling in favor of Cambodia in 1962, and again reinforcing that decision in 2013.

Download Our Application



Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam

Page No

10



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- However, disputes over surrounding lands persist, occasionally leading to **armed clashes**, heightening regional tension.

## Looking Ahead: Diplomacy and Regional Stability

While both Cambodia and Thailand are members of **ASEAN**, the grouping's non-interference policy often limits its role in **resolving bilateral conflicts**. There is increasing international interest in the dispute due to its potential to disrupt **regional peace and cross-border trade**.

**Did You Know?** Cambodia is home to **Angkor Wat**, the world's largest religious monument, and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Its architectural brilliance reflects the country's deep cultural roots and ancient Khmer empire.

## Conclusion: A Nation of Rich Heritage and Strategic Importance

As Cambodia navigates both **domestic development** and **border challenges**, its role as a bridge between Southeast Asian neighbors becomes even more critical. The recent dispute underscores the importance of **dialogue, diplomacy, and regional cooperation** in maintaining peace in one of Asia's most dynamic regions.



[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

11





## India-UK Free Trade Agreement 2025: A Defining Moment in Global Economic Diplomacy

**Context:** In a historic development, **India and the United Kingdom** signed a **Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA)** on **July 24, 2025**, during **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's** official visit to the UK. Accompanying the trade deal, both nations also unveiled a forward-looking strategic roadmap titled the **India-UK Vision 2035**, replacing the earlier **Roadmap 2030**.



The Vision 2035 document lays out a robust framework for cooperation across **trade, technology, climate action, defence, education**, and **innovation**, aiming to foster deeper ties grounded in **shared democratic values** and mutual economic growth.

### Key Highlights of the India-UK Free Trade Agreement:

The agreement is one of India's most **comprehensive FTAs**, delivering **substantial benefits** across goods, services, and labour mobility. Here's a sector-wise breakdown:

#### 1. Market Access: A New Era of Duty-Free Trade:

- **For India:** **99% of Indian exports** to the UK will now enjoy **zero tariffs**, greatly benefiting key labour-intensive sectors.
- **For the UK:** **90% of tariff lines** will see cuts, with **85% reaching zero-duty status** within a decade.
- **Sectors Benefited:** **Textiles, marine products, chemicals, base metals, and processed foods.**
- **Example:** Tariffs on processed foods slashed from **70% to 0%**; Indian **tea, spices, rubber, and plastics** gain free access.

#### 2. Agriculture: Boosting Rural Prosperity:

- **Zero Duties on 95%+ agricultural lines** including **millets, fruits, pulses, vegetables, pickles, and organic herbs.**
- Could raise India's **agri-exports by 20% within 3 years**, supporting its **\$100 billion export target by 2030.**
- **Sensitive products like dairy and apples remain protected.**

#### 3. Marine Sector: Coastal Economies Set to Benefit:

- **Tariff elimination** on exports like **shrimp, tuna, and fishmeal.**
- India currently holds just **2.25% of the UK's marine imports**, leaving **significant room for growth.**
- Potential to transform **coastal livelihoods** and enhance marine exports to **\$5.4 billion.**

#### 4. Textiles & Apparel: Competitive Edge Reclaimed:

- Covers over **1,140 product categories**, all now **duty-free.**
- India poised to gain an **additional 5% market share** in UK textiles.

[Download Our Application](#)



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- Helps **level the field** with nations like **Bangladesh and Cambodia**, boosting **handicrafts, carpets, and home textiles**.
5. **Engineering Goods: Aiming for Export Doubling:**
- Presently, India exports **\$4.28 billion** worth of engineering goods to the UK.
  - With **tariffs up to 18% removed**, exports are projected to hit **\$7.5 billion by 2030**.
6. **Pharmaceuticals & Medical Devices: Gateway to New Markets**
- Tariff-free access** for **generic drugs, surgical tools, and diagnostic devices** like ECG and X-ray systems.
  - India currently exports only **\$1 billion** in pharma to the UK, despite UK importing over **\$30 billion** globally.
7. **Chemicals & Plastics: Strong Growth Forecast:**
- Chemical exports** projected to grow **30–40%**, reaching **\$750 million in FY26**.
  - Plastics** (films, kitchenware, sheets) to see **15% export growth**, aided by lower input costs and enhanced pricing power.
8. **Niche Sectors: Toys, Jewellery & Leather Get a Boost**
- Toys and sports goods** gain export advantage over **China and Vietnam**.
  - Jewellery exports** could **double within 2–3 years**, tapping into the UK's **\$3 billion jewellery market**.
  - Leather and footwear exports** from **MSME hubs** like Kanpur, Agra, Kolhapur, Chennai set to exceed **\$900 million**, aided by **removal of 16% duties**.
9. **Services & Skilled Mobility: Empowering Indian Professionals**
- 36 UK service sectors** opened without the **Economic Needs Test**.
  - Indian professionals can now work in **35 sectors** for up to **2 years**.
  - 75,000 Indian workers** will be **exempt from UK social security contributions** for **3 years**, thanks to a **Double Contribution Avoidance Agreement**.
  - Annual quotas set for **1,800 chefs, yoga instructors, and artists**, enhancing **cultural exchange**.

## Strategic Impact of the India–UK FTA:

### Expanding Trade Volumes

- Bilateral trade expected to rise by **39%**, adding approximately **£25.5 billion annually**.
- UK's exports to India projected to surge **by 60%**, adding **£15.7 billion by 2040**.

### Post-RCEP Pivot:

- After India's **2019 exit from the RCEP**, this agreement reflects a **strategic pivot toward Western economies** such as the **UK and EU**.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**13**



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- Aligns with India's larger agenda to build **high-standard, rules-based trade partnerships** with advanced economies.

## Bilateral Gains:

- India** strengthens key sectors while improving its **global market competitiveness**.
- UK** gains deeper access to **India's fast-growing consumer base** and key export sectors like **automobiles, alcohol, and technology**.

## Conclusion: A Turning Point in India's Trade Strategy

The **India-UK Free Trade Agreement** isn't just a bilateral trade deal — it's a **blueprint for India's 21st-century global economic engagement**. It signals India's readiness to take on **complex trade negotiations**, while ensuring **inclusive growth, job creation, and strategic depth** in foreign partnerships. The agreement places both countries on a **path of shared prosperity**, built on **democratic values, innovation, and mutual respect**.



[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

14





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 2 – Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice

## Presidential Reference and the Supreme Court: Can Past Verdicts Be Clarified Without Being Overturned?

**Context:** In a significant constitutional development, the **Supreme Court of India** has issued notices to the **Union Government and all States** following a **Presidential Reference** under **Article 143 of the Constitution**. The move seeks the apex court's advisory opinion on whether **courts can compel constitutional authorities like the President and Governors to act within specific timelines on Bills passed by State legislatures**.



A **Constitution Bench** led by Chief Justice B.R. Gavai is slated to commence detailed hearings by **mid-August 2025**.

### Background: April 2025 Judgment Under Review

This Reference stems from a landmark **April 2025 ruling** delivered in response to a petition by the **Tamil Nadu government**. In that case, the **Supreme Court ruled that the inordinate delay by Governor R.N. Ravi** in assenting to **ten State Bills**—which had been re-enacted by the legislature—was **"constitutionally impermissible."** For the first time, the Court introduced **judicially enforceable timelines** for both **Presidential and Gubernatorial assent** to Bills.

Following this, **President Droupadi Murmu**, exercising powers under **Article 143(1)**, referred **14 constitutional questions** to the Court, seeking clarity on the limits of **judicial supervision over constitutional authorities**.

### Understanding Article 143: The Supreme Court's Advisory Jurisdiction

**Article 143(1)** empowers the **President** to seek the **Supreme Court's advisory opinion** on matters of **law or fact of public importance**, even if **no case is currently before the Court**.

- This provision has roots in the **Government of India Act, 1935**.
- It has been invoked **at least 14 times since Independence**, dealing with matters such as the **Berubari Union, Ram Janmabhoomi**, and the **Collegium system**.
- The **Court's opinion is advisory, not binding**, but carries **tremendous persuasive authority**.

However, **Article 145(3)** mandates that such References must be heard by a **Constitution Bench of at least five judges**, ensuring constitutional depth and balance.

### Can the Supreme Court Decline a Presidential Reference?

Yes. Though Article 143 uses the word **"may"**, implying discretion, this was **judicially confirmed in the Special Courts Bill case (1978)**. The **Supreme Court may refuse to answer**, especially if the questions are:

- **Hypothetical**
- **Purely political**
- **Require expert, non-legal evidence**

In **Ismail Faruqui v. Union of India (1994)**, the Court declined a Reference linked to the **Ayodhya-Babri Masjid dispute**, citing **ongoing civil proceedings and political sensitivities**. Similarly, in **1982**, it refused to answer a question on a law regarding **migrant resettlement in J&K** after it was already enacted.

### Are Supreme Court's Advisory Opinions Binding?

The **legal status** of advisory opinions has remained **ambiguous**:

- In **St. Xavier's College v. State of Gujarat (1974)**, the Court ruled that advisory opinions are **not binding** under **Article 141**, which covers **"law declared"** by the Court.

Download Our Application



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

15



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- Yet in **R.K. Garg v. Union of India (1981)**, the Court treated reasoning in an advisory opinion as **binding**.
- In the **Cauvery Water Disputes case (1991)**, the Court observed that such opinions “**deserve due respect and weight**” but stopped short of making them binding.

Thus, while **not enforceable**, advisory opinions **strongly guide legal and constitutional developments**.

**Can the April 2025 Verdict Be Reversed Through a Presidential Reference?**

**Absolutely not.** The **Supreme Court has consistently held** that a **Presidential Reference cannot override or reverse a binding judgment** rendered under its **adjudicatory jurisdiction**.

- In the **Cauvery Water Disputes case**, the Court clarified that **Article 143 is not a backdoor for review**.
- The only legal route to challenge a final verdict is through a **review petition or curative petition**, as per Articles **137 and 142**.

However, the Court may use the **Reference to clarify or expand on its legal reasoning**, as seen in:

- **1998 Collegium case**, where clarification led to modifications in the appointment process of judges.
- **Natural Resources Allocation case (2012)**, where the Court clarified the meaning of “**auction**” in the allocation of national resources without altering its earlier rulings.

**What This Means for the Future:**

While the **April 2025 decision remains final and enforceable**, the present Reference provides an opportunity for the **Supreme Court to elaborate its constitutional reasoning**, especially regarding the **doctrine of separation of powers**, the **scope of judicial review**, and the **autonomy of constitutional functionaries**.

Crucially, the **14 questions** raised in the current Reference **go beyond the Tamil Nadu case**, potentially impacting **ongoing cases in Kerala, Punjab**, and other States where Governors have allegedly delayed assent to Bills.

**Additional Insight: Why This Matters Now**

In recent years, there has been growing friction between **State governments and Governors**, particularly in **non-BJP-ruled States**. Governors have increasingly been accused of **withholding or delaying assent** for **political or ideological reasons**, raising serious concerns about **federal balance** and **legislative sovereignty**.

This Presidential Reference could, therefore, play a **pivotal role in shaping the contours of Indian federalism**, reaffirming or redefining the **powers and duties of Governors and the President** in a parliamentary democracy.

**Conclusion:** The upcoming hearings on this **Presidential Reference** are more than a legal formality—they are a **constitutional moment**. While the **Supreme Court cannot and will not undo its April 2025 verdict**, it holds the power to **clarify critical constitutional doctrines** that will shape the functioning of **State legislatures, the Union executive, and India’s democratic ethos** for years to come.



## MiG-21 Bison: India's Iconic Fighter Jet Nears Final Flight

**Context:** The **Indian Air Force (IAF)** is preparing to bid farewell to one of its most iconic aircraft — the **MiG-21 Bison**. By **September 2025**, the last of these Russian-origin fighter jets will be retired from service, bringing an end to over **six decades of operational legacy**. The retirement marks the closure of a historic chapter in India's military aviation.



### A Supersonic Trailblazer: First of Its Kind in India

The **MiG-21** was the **first supersonic jet** to be inducted into the Indian Air Force, entering service in **1963**. Designed by the **Mikoyan-Gurevich Design Bureau** of the **former Soviet Union**, it became a symbol of India's aspirations for aerial dominance during the Cold War era.

- India acquired license production rights from the USSR and went on to **build 657 MiG-21s** domestically through **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)**.
- It remains the **second most produced fighter aircraft in the world**, after the American **F-4 Phantom**.

### Known by Many Names, Feared by Many Adversaries

The aircraft earned several nicknames across the globe:

- **NATO reporting name: Fishbed**
- **'Balalaika'** – due to its triangular wing design resembling the Russian string instrument
- **'Ołówek'** (Polish for **"pencil"**) – for its slender fuselage
- **'Ăn Bạc'** (Vietnamese for **"silver swallow"**) – for its agility and shine

Its unique delta-wing configuration and compact build made it ideal for high-speed interception and dogfights.

### A Veteran of Every Indian Conflict Since 1963:

The **MiG-21** has participated in **almost every conflict India has faced** post-independence:

- **1965 India-Pakistan War**
- **1971 Indo-Pak War**, including the **creation of Bangladesh**
- **Kargil War of 1999**, where it was used for ground-attack roles
- **Balakot Airstrikes in 2019**, where a MiG-21 Bison famously engaged in aerial combat with Pakistani F-16s
- **Operation Sindoor** — a recent mission that further added to its combat résumé

With these engagements, the MiG-21 has arguably seen **more combat than any other fighter in Indian service**.

### A Machine of Mixed Legacy: Power and Controversy

While the MiG-21 holds a **glorious record in air defense**, it has also drawn criticism for its **high accident rate** in later years. Often referred to in headlines as the **"Flying Coffin"**, the aging aircraft has suffered from **maintenance challenges, outdated avionics, and pilot safety issues**.

[Download Our Application](#)





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



Over **400 accidents involving MiG-21s** have been reported since their induction, raising questions about **continued reliance** on an aging fleet. However, in its early decades, it was considered cutting-edge and unmatched in speed and maneuverability.

## Why the Retirement Matters:

The retirement of the MiG-21 reflects a **generational shift in India's airpower** strategy:

- The IAF is now modernizing its fleet with **Rafale, LCA Tejas**, and plans for **fifth-generation stealth aircraft** under the **AMCA (Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft)** project.
- The phase-out of the MiG-21 opens the way for newer technologies, enhanced safety, and improved battlefield effectiveness.

## Did You Know?

- The MiG-21 holds the record for being the **longest-serving combat aircraft** in the history of the IAF.
- Globally, over **11,000 MiG-21s** were built — making it **one of the most mass-produced jet fighters** ever.
- Apart from India, it served in over **60 countries**, including **Vietnam, Egypt, Libya, Poland, and North Korea**.
- The MiG-21 was **one of the first aircraft capable of achieving Mach 2 speed**, which is **twice the speed of sound**.

## The End of an Era, but a Legacy That Will Fly Forever

As the Indian Air Force prepares to send off the **MiG-21 Bison**, it is more than just the retirement of an aircraft — it is the **farewell of a legend** that shaped India's skies for decades. It trained generations of pilots, defended the nation in its darkest hours, and became an indelible part of India's **military and strategic history**.

The **MiG-21 may soon stop flying**, but its **legacy will remain etched in the annals of Indian aviation** for generations to come.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

18



## Sea Slugs: Nature's Colorful Marvels Revealing New Secrets

**Context:** In an exciting discovery for marine biology, scientists have recently identified **two previously unknown species** of **wart sea slugs** off the coast of **North Sulawesi, Indonesia**. These new species—**Phyllidia ovata** and **Phyllidia fontjei**—have now been **formally described**, adding to the rich biodiversity of the Indo-Pacific region. The find highlights the **undiscovered potential of coral reef ecosystems**, which continue to surprise researchers with their hidden wonders.



### What Are Sea Slugs?

Commonly referred to as **sea slugs**, these fascinating creatures are part of a group called **nudibranchs**—a type of **soft-bodied marine mollusc** belonging to **Phylum Mollusca** and **Class Gastropoda**. Found in **oceans worldwide**, from **shallow tropical reefs** to the **deepest trenches**, sea slugs have evolved into some of the most **visually striking animals on Earth**.

### Nature's Living Rainbows:

Sea slugs are famous for their **vibrant colours**, **bold patterns**, and **fluid movements**—traits that are not just beautiful but also **defensive**. Their dazzling appearances often act as **warning signals** to predators, as many species are **highly toxic**.

- Their **toxicity** is often **acquired from their diet**, especially from **sponges, jellyfish, and anemones**.
- Some can even **retain the stinging cells (nematocysts)** of jellyfish and use them as defense mechanisms.

### Naked but Not Defenseless:

Unlike other molluscs, sea slugs **lack external shells**, which is why they're sometimes described as “**naked snails**.” Despite this, they have adapted **incredible survival mechanisms**:

- **Photosynthetic Abilities:** Some species, like *Elysia chlorotica*, can **photosynthesise** by incorporating **chloroplasts** from the algae they consume—a phenomenon known as **kleptoplasty**.
- **Gene Theft:** Certain sea slugs can **steal genes from their prey** and **incorporate them into their own DNA**.
- **Limb Regeneration:** In some species, **lost body parts can regenerate**, adding another layer to their survival toolkit.

### Ecological Importance of Sea Slugs:

Sea slugs are more than just eye-catching marine creatures. They play a **vital ecological role** in **coral reef ecosystems**:

- Their presence is often a **positive indicator of coral health**.
- They help **control populations of algae and sponges**, contributing to **reef balance**.
- Some even act as **bioindicators**—their **sensitivity to pollution and climate change** helps scientists monitor reef health.

### Behaviours and Lifestyle:

[Download Our Application](#)





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **Feeding Habits:** These slow grazers feed on **algae, hydroids, small invertebrates**, and even **other nudibranchs**.
- **Diurnal and Nocturnal:** While many species are **active during the day**, some are **nocturnal** and venture out under the cover of darkness.
- **Reproduction:** Sea slugs are **simultaneous hermaphrodites**, meaning they carry both male and female reproductive organs, often exchanging roles during mating.

## A Field of Endless Discovery:

With over **3,000 known species** and more being discovered regularly, sea slugs continue to captivate scientists and divers alike. The discovery of **Phyllidia ovata** and **Phyllidia fontjei** is a **reminder of how much remains unexplored** beneath the waves.

## Conclusion: Small Creatures, Big Impact

Sea slugs, despite their delicate and miniature appearance, represent some of the **most complex and adaptive life forms** in the ocean. Their **brilliant adaptations, striking appearance**, and **ecological importance** make them a symbol of the **hidden intelligence and beauty of marine life**.



[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**20**





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 1 – Geography

## Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary: A Biodiversity Hotspot at India's Southern Tip

**Context:** In a remarkable revelation highlighting the sanctuary's rich biodiversity, a **research scholar recently documented around 450 species of moths** at the Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary. This discovery emphasizes the ecological significance of the region and showcases its potential for **scientific research and conservation**.

### Location: Where Land Meets Three Seas

The Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary is located in Kanyakumari district, Tamil Nadu, near the **southernmost tip of mainland India**. It lies at the **unique confluence of the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, and Indian Ocean**, making it not only **geographically important** but also **ecologically diverse**.



- **To the north**, the sanctuary shares its boundary with the **Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve**.
- **To the south**, it is flanked by the **Kodayar left bank channel** and the **Thovalai channel**.
- **To the west**, it borders the **state of Kerala**.

### Lifeline Rivers and Lush Landscapes:

The sanctuary is the **origin point for seven rivers**, including the well-known **Pahrli** and **Thamirabarani** rivers. These rivers play a vital role in supporting **agriculture, biodiversity, and the livelihoods of local communities**.

### Diverse Vegetation Covering Multiple Ecozones:

The natural vegetation of Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary spans across several ecological zones:

- **Southern thorn forests**
- **Dry and moist deciduous forests**
- **Semi-evergreen and evergreen hill sholas**
- **Grassy hilltops and downs**

This variety in vegetation supports an equally wide array of **flora and fauna**, making it one of the **most ecologically rich sanctuaries in southern India**.

### Rich and Rare Fauna: A Sanctuary for the Wild

The sanctuary provides safe haven to several **threatened and endemic species**, including:

- **Indian Bison (Gaur)**
- **Asiatic Elephant**
- **Nilgiri Tahr** – an endangered mountain goat species found only in the Western Ghats
- **Sambar Deer**
- **Lion-tailed Macaque** – one of the most endangered primates in the world

In addition to these, the forest is also home to **reptiles like the Indian Rock Python**, and now, as revealed, **hundreds of moth species**, many of which are indicators of **healthy ecosystems**.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

21



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



## Home to Indigenous Communities:

Several **tribal communities** reside in the **reserve forests adjacent to the sanctuary**, living in close harmony with nature. Their **traditional knowledge** of the forests and sustainable practices are an **integral part of the sanctuary's cultural heritage**.

## Conservation Significance:

- The sanctuary lies within the **Western Ghats**, which is one of the **eight "hottest hotspots" of biodiversity in the world**, as declared by Conservation International.
- It forms a crucial part of the **Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve**, contributing to the conservation of **rare and endemic species**.
- The discovery of **450+ moth species** serves as an indicator of the **sanctuary's excellent environmental health**, as moths play key roles in **pollination, food webs, and ecosystem stability**.

## Did You Know?

- **Kanniyakumari district** is the only place in India where you can **watch the sunrise and sunset over the ocean from the same spot**.
- The region is home to **Agasthiyar Malai**, a sacred peak named after the sage Agastya and considered one of the oldest geological formations in the country.

## Conclusion: A Sanctuary Worth Protecting

The **Kanniyakumari Wildlife Sanctuary** is much more than just a green expanse—it's a living mosaic of **natural wonders, ancient forests, cultural richness, and ecological balance**. As new species continue to be discovered, its importance as a **biodiversity reserve and conservation model** becomes ever clearer.

freedom UPSC  
TOGETHER WE SCALE HEIGHTS

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

22



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 3 – Digital Economy

## Unified Payments Interface (UPI): India's Digital Payment Revolution Gains Global Recognition

**Context:** The **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**, in its recent report titled *"Growing Retail Digital Payments: The Value of Interoperability,"* has **praised the Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** for revolutionizing India's digital payments ecosystem. The IMF emphasized UPI's **interoperable design**, calling it a model for developing countries aiming for **inclusive and scalable payment systems**.



### What is UPI? A Game-Changer in Digital Transactions

The **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** is a **real-time payment system** developed by the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**. It allows users to **link multiple bank accounts** in a single app to **send and receive money instantly**, without needing to input card or bank details repeatedly.

- **Dual Functionality:** UPI supports both **push (sending)** and **pull (receiving)** transactions using a **Virtual Payment Address (VPA)**, offering high convenience and security through **two-factor authentication**.
- **Built on Robust Tech:** It leverages the **Immediate Payment Service (IMPS)** and integrates with the **Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS)**.
  - **IMPS** enables fast fund transfers using mobile numbers and account details.
  - **AePS** allows Aadhaar-based services like cash withdrawal, deposits, and balance checks through biometric verification.

### BHIM App: India's UPI at Your Fingertips

The **BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money)** app, launched by NPCI, is a flagship **UPI-based mobile application** designed to promote easy, secure, and fast transactions—especially in rural and semi-urban India.

### How UPI Reshaped India's Digital Economy:

#### Unprecedented Growth and Reach

- In **June 2025 alone**, UPI processed **24.03 lakh crore** across **18.39 billion transactions**.
- UPI now caters to **491 million users** and **65 million merchants**, connecting **over 675 banks**.
- It has become the **world's largest real-time payments platform**, handling **over 640 million daily transactions**, surpassing global giants like **Visa**.

#### Seamless Interoperability Across Apps and Banks:

UPI broke the limitations of **closed-loop systems** (like individual digital wallets), enabling users to **transact across different apps and banks** with ease.

- This **platform-agnostic model** fosters innovation, improves competition, and enhances **user experience**.
- **QR codes** powered by UPI are now commonplace, making **cashless payments effortless even at local shops and street vendors**.

#### Empowering Financial Inclusion:

One of UPI's most transformative roles has been in **bridging the financial divide**:

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

23





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- With **zero-cost** and **real-time transfers**, UPI has made digital payments **accessible to small vendors, self-employed individuals, and first-time users**.
- It has empowered **kirana stores, gig workers, and rural communities**, while also **boosting digital literacy and trust** in financial systems.

## UPI's Global Footprint Expands:

India's digital diplomacy has taken UPI across borders. It is now **live in 7 countries**:

- **UAE, Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, and Mauritius.**
- Its **launch in France** marked UPI's **European debut**.
- India is actively promoting UPI integration within **BRICS nations**, aiming to ease **cross-border remittances and payments** for Indian migrants and travelers.

## Digital Backbone Behind UPI's Success:

The rise of UPI wasn't an overnight miracle—it stands on a **strong digital foundation** known as the **JAM Trinity**:

### 1. Jan Dhan Yojana (Financial Inclusion):

- Over **55.9 crore bank accounts** opened under Jan Dhan as of July 2025.
- Enabled **direct benefit transfers (DBTs)** and brought millions into the **formal banking system**.

### 2. Aadhaar (Digital Identity):

- Over **142 crore Aadhaar IDs** issued by June 2025.
- Enabled **secure, biometric-based authentication**, facilitating **digital governance** and payments.

### 3. Mobile Connectivity:

- India now boasts one of the **world's fastest-growing 5G networks**, with **4.74 lakh base stations** covering nearly all districts.
- **Mobile data costs** dropped from 308/GB in 2014 to just 9.34 in 2022, making internet access highly affordable.
- Over **116 crore mobile subscribers** now use mobile-based financial services, many for the first time.

## Did You Know?

- UPI handles more than **85% of India's digital retail payments** and accounts for **almost half of global real-time transactions**.
- Several African and Southeast Asian nations are studying the **UPI model** to replicate it for their financial inclusion goals.
- India's RuPay card and UPI system have begun integrating to create a seamless **card-to-app transaction ecosystem**.

## Conclusion: UPI – A Blueprint for Digital Transformation

The **Unified Payments Interface** has transformed how India **pays, banks, and transacts**, becoming a symbol of **self-reliant innovation** and **inclusive digital progress**. As it expands globally, UPI stands not just as a **technological success**, but as a **model for empowering people through digital infrastructure**.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

24





## Lantana Camara: A Beautiful Menace Threatening India's Forest Ecosystems

**Context:** The invasive plant **Lantana camara**, once introduced in India as an **ornamental shrub**, has now become a serious ecological threat. Recent reports reveal that it has **infested nearly 3.25 lakh hectares** of forest land in **Himachal Pradesh alone**, severely **endangering native biodiversity** and disrupting the natural balance of ecosystems.



### What is Lantana Camara?

**Lantana camara** is an **invasive alien species** that has spread rapidly across the **tropical and subtropical regions** of India.

- Originally **native to Central and South America**, it belongs to the **Verbenaceae family**.
- It was **first introduced in India during the early 1800s** by the British for use in **gardens and hedges** due to its vibrant, colorful flowers.
- However, over time, it has **escaped cultivation** and now grows **wild**, covering vast stretches of forest and grassland.

### Rapid Spread and Invasion Pattern:

Lantana grows **aggressively**, forming **dense thickets** that block sunlight and suppress the growth of other plant species.

- Its invasion pattern shows an **alarming trend**—it spreads from **low-lying regions to higher altitudes**, gradually conquering **hills and forested slopes**.
- In India, Lantana has now become **one of the most widespread invasive weeds**, especially across the **Western Ghats, central India, and the Himalayan foothills**.

### Ecological Consequences:

The presence of **Lantana camara** in forested areas leads to a **significant decline in native flora and fauna**.

- It **releases allelochemicals**—toxic compounds that **inhibit the germination and growth** of nearby native plants.
- This results in **monoculture-like conditions**, reducing **plant diversity**, and in turn, affecting **insects, birds, and other wildlife** that depend on indigenous vegetation.
- **Forest regeneration slows down**, and in extreme cases, native species may **disappear entirely**.

### Socio-Economic and Agricultural Impact:

Lantana not only impacts biodiversity but also poses **threats to agriculture and rural livelihoods**:

- It **invades grazing lands**, reducing fodder availability for livestock.
- **Farmlands adjacent to forested areas** are vulnerable to its spread, forcing farmers to spend on manual or chemical removal.
- It increases **forest fire risks**, as the plant's **woody biomass** is highly **flammable during dry seasons**.

Can Lantana Be Managed? Turning a Threat into a Resource

Despite its destructive nature, Lantana's biomass holds **potential for productive use**, if managed wisely:



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- Its **wood** can be used to make **low-cost furniture, handicrafts, and fuelwood**.
- When processed properly, its **leaves and stems** can be converted into **organic compost and vermicompost**—a sustainable alternative to **chemical fertilizers**.
- **Livelihood programs** in parts of India, including **Madhya Pradesh and Uttarakhand**, have begun engaging local communities in **Lantana removal and biomass utilization**, offering **employment and environmental restoration**.

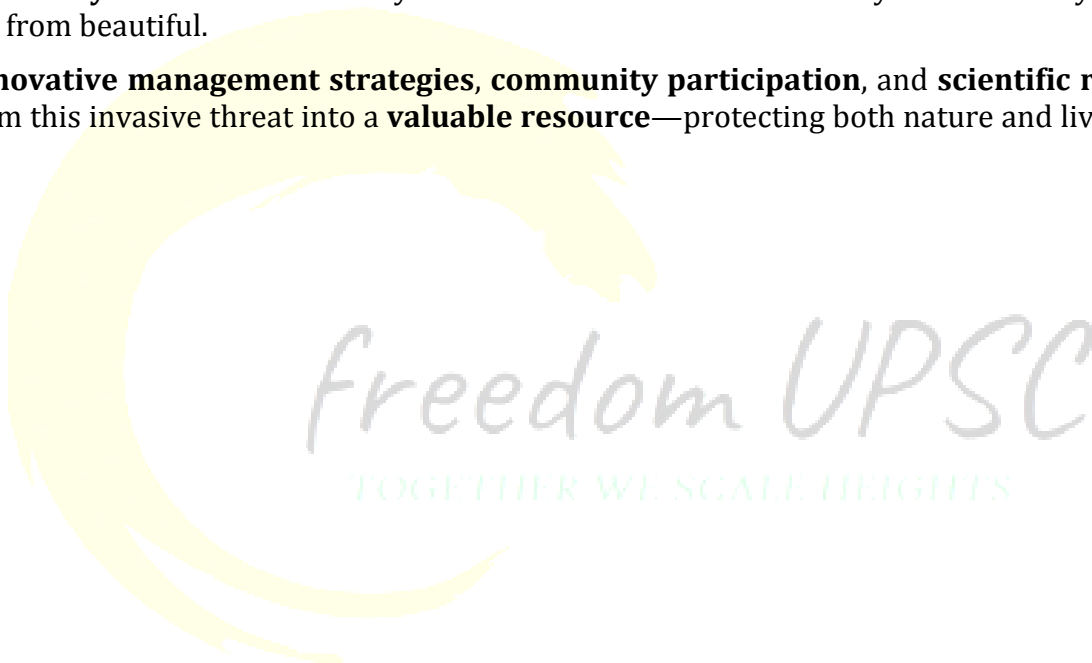
## Interesting Fact: From Poisonous Shrub to Useful Product

While **toxic to many animals**, certain parts of the Lantana plant are being **experimented with in biopesticide research**. In some regions, Lantana extract has been shown to **repel insects** and may serve as an **eco-friendly pest control solution**.

## Conclusion: The Dual Nature of Lantana

**Lantana camara** is a classic example of how a **non-native species**, when unchecked, can **outcompete native biodiversity** and alter entire ecosystems. While its **vivid flowers** may deceive the eye, its ecological impact is far from beautiful.

Yet, with **innovative management strategies, community participation, and scientific research**, India can transform this invasive threat into a **valuable resource**—protecting both nature and livelihoods in the process.



[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

26



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

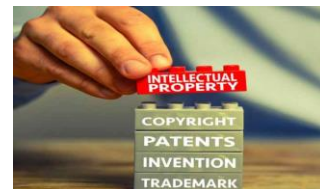
By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 3 – Economy

## India Witnesses Surge in IP Filings Over Five Years

**Context:** India has witnessed a **remarkable surge in Intellectual Property (IP) filings**, recording a **44% growth** over the past five years. The total filings rose from **4,77,533 in 2020–21 to 6,89,991 in 2024–25**, showcasing the country's expanding innovation landscape and growing awareness of **Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs)**.



### Breaking Down the Growth: Geographical Indications Lead the Way

Among the various categories of IP, **Geographical Indications (GIs)** have seen the **highest increase—a staggering 380% rise**. This is followed by:

- **Industrial Designs: 266% growth**
- **Patents: 180% increase**
- **Copyrights: 83% rise**
- **Trademarks: 28% growth**
- **Semiconductor Integrated Circuits Layout-Designs (SICLD): 20% increase**

This exponential rise is a testament to **India's growing culture of innovation and creativity**, supported by robust government initiatives.

### What is Intellectual Property?

**Intellectual Property** is defined as the **"Product of the Mind"**—creations of human intellect in **industrial, scientific, literary, and artistic** fields. It includes:

- **Patents**
- **Copyrights**
- **Trademarks**
- **Industrial Designs**
- **Geographical Indications**
- **Layout Design of Integrated Circuits**
- **Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers' Rights**
- **Trade Secrets / Undisclosed Information**

**IP Rights** grant the **exclusive legal ownership** of these innovations to the creator for a **limited time**, promoting innovation by rewarding **human ingenuity and creativity**.

### Key Insight: Are Indian Patents Valid Globally?

**No**, patents are **territorial rights**, meaning an **Indian patent is only valid within India**. To secure protection abroad, applicants must apply for patents in each individual country, often via the **Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT)** mechanism for streamlined global filings.

### Government Support: Driving IP Growth

India's transformation into an IP-conscious nation is propelled by landmark policy initiatives and technology adoption:

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

27



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **National IPR Policy (2016):** A comprehensive framework to promote and protect all forms of IP under a unified vision.
- **CIPAM: The Cell for IPR Promotion and Management**, coordinates the policy's implementation.
- **National Intellectual Property Awareness Mission (NIPAM):** Spreads IP literacy and basic training across schools and colleges.
- **Startups Intellectual Property Protection (SIPP) Scheme:** Offers **free legal and technical support** to startups for filing patents, trademarks, and design applications.
- **AI & ML-based Trademark Search Tools:** Enhance efficiency and accuracy in trademark examination.
- **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM):** Established by **NITI Aayog** to foster entrepreneurship and innovation, including:
  - **Atal Tinkering Labs**
  - **Atal Incubation Centres**
  - **Atal New India Challenges**
  - **Mentor India Program**

## Additional Insight: India on the Global IP Map

India now ranks among the **top 10 patent-filing countries** globally and is steadily improving its position in the **Global Innovation Index**. This is a strong indicator of the nation's shift towards an **innovation-driven economy**, especially in sectors like **pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, information technology, and renewable energy**.

## Conclusion: A Promising Future for Innovation in India

The sharp rise in IP filings reflects **India's deepening culture of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurship**. With continued government support, legal reforms, and awareness programs, India is well on its way to becoming a **global IP powerhouse**. This momentum aligns seamlessly with India's broader goals of **economic transformation, self-reliance (Atmanirbhar Bharat)**, and **sustainable development through innovation**.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

28





## WiFEX Marks a Decade of Scientific Excellence in Fog Forecasting

**Context:** India's pioneering **Winter Fog Experiment (WiFEX)** has successfully completed **ten years** of groundbreaking research into **North India's dense winter fog** — a natural phenomenon that disrupts the daily lives of millions during the colder months.

Launched in the **winter of 2015** at **Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA), New Delhi**, this unique initiative was spearheaded by the **Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM)** under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**. It was executed in collaboration with the **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** and the **National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF)**.



### What is WiFEX? A Global-Scale Effort on Fog

**WiFEX** is among the **world's few long-term open-field research projects** dedicated exclusively to the study of **winter fog** — particularly across the **Indo-Gangetic Plain**, where thick fog frequently causes **major delays and accidents** in air, rail, and road transportation.

### Key Objectives of WiFEX:

- To develop **accurate now-casting** (within 6 hours) and **short-to-medium-range forecasts** of winter fog.
- To **minimize the economic losses** and **life-threatening risks** posed by dense fog, particularly in the aviation and transport sectors.
- To aid in **policy formulation and disaster preparedness** by providing timely and precise information.

### How the Experiment Was Conducted:

Scientists under WiFEX deployed an array of **advanced instruments**, including:

- **Micrometeorological towers**
- **Ceilometers** (used to detect cloud base and fog layers)
- **High-frequency sensors**

These tools were used to collect high-resolution data on:

- **Temperature stratification**
- **Relative humidity**
- **Wind patterns**
- **Turbulence**
- **Soil heat flux**
- **Aerosol concentration**

This rich dataset enabled researchers to understand the **complex physical mechanisms** behind the **formation, duration, and dissipation** of winter fog.

### Game-Changing Output: High-Resolution Fog Prediction Model

[Download Our Application](#)



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



A major achievement of WiFEX has been the development of a **high-resolution (3 km) probabilistic fog forecasting model**. This tool is now considered one of the **most advanced fog prediction systems in South Asia**, boasting over **85% accuracy** in predicting **very dense fog** (visibility below 200 meters).

It can forecast:

- When fog will start
- How dense it will become
- How long it will last
- When it will lift

**Broader Impact: Saving Lives, Boosting the Economy**

The insights and tools developed under WiFEX are already helping in:

- **Reducing flight delays and train cancellations**
- **Enhancing road safety** by informing early-morning commuters
- **Protecting lives** by enabling better emergency planning and traffic management
- **Improving energy efficiency** by optimizing power plant operations that are sensitive to weather

**Did You Know?**

India experiences some of the **densest and most persistent fog events in the world**, particularly between **December and February**, affecting cities like Delhi, Amritsar, Lucknow, and Patna. In recent years, **climate variability** has made fog prediction even more crucial.

**Conclusion: A Vision for Safer Winters**

With ten successful years behind it, **WiFEX has transformed India's fog forecasting capabilities** and placed the country at the forefront of **atmospheric research**. Its findings continue to contribute to **global climate models** and pave the way for a **safer, smarter, and more prepared India** in the face of winter weather hazards.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**30**



## Breakthrough in Pineapple Protection: Indian Scientists Discover Gene to Combat Fusariosis

**Context:** In a major leap for agricultural biotechnology, **Indian researchers have identified a crucial gene in pineapple** that may offer an effective and sustainable defence against **Fusariosis**, a devastating fungal disease threatening pineapple crops across the country.

This discovery marks a significant step forward for farmers struggling with

crop losses and inconsistent yields due to fungal infections.



### Understanding Fusariosis: A Hidden Threat to Pineapple

**Fusariosis** is caused by the aggressive fungus *Fusarium moniliforme*, one of the **most destructive pathogens** in pineapple cultivation. It attacks the plant's **stem**, causes **blackening of leaves**, and **rots the fruit internally**, often making it unmarketable.

This disease not only slashes productivity but also leads to **serious economic losses** in key pineapple-producing regions.

### Research Highlights: Gene Discovery Brings Hope

Traditional plant breeding methods have long struggled to outpace fast-evolving fungal pathogens. But this latest research brings new hope:

- Scientists focused on the **Somatic Embryogenesis Receptor Kinase (SERK)** family of genes, known for boosting plant immunity and stress tolerance.
- Specifically, they zeroed in on the **AcSERK3 gene**, a natural component of the pineapple's genome.
- By **overexpressing AcSERK3**, researchers significantly **enhanced the plant's immune response**, empowering it to resist **Fusarium infection** more effectively.

This advancement could lead to the development of **disease-resistant pineapple varieties**, reducing dependency on chemical fungicides and increasing farm resilience.

### Pineapple at a Glance: India's Tropical Treasure

- **Scientific name:** *Ananas comosus* L. Merr.
- **Family:** Bromeliaceae
- **Climate:** Grows best in **15–30°C**; drought-tolerant due to **specialized water-storage cells**
- **Rainfall requirement:** 600–2500 mm annually (**optimal: 1000–1500 mm**)
- **Soil:** Adapts to various soils but **cannot withstand waterlogging**
- **Cropping patterns:** Can be cultivated as a **monocrop** or **intercrop** in **coconut plantations**

### Major Pineapple-Producing Regions:

In India, key pineapple-growing states include:

- **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Manipur**
- **West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka, Goa**

Globally, top producers are:

[Download Our Application](#)



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **Thailand, Philippines, Brazil, China, Nigeria, Mexico, Indonesia, Colombia, and the United States**

India is among the **top 10 pineapple-producing countries**, and this gene discovery may help enhance its competitiveness on the global stage.

## Did You Know?

Pineapples contain **bromelain**, a natural enzyme known for its **anti-inflammatory** and **digestive** properties. Beyond being a tropical delicacy, it also holds **medicinal value** and is used in **cosmetics, health supplements, and food processing**.

## Conclusion: A Step Toward Resilient Farming

The identification of the **AcSERK3 gene** is a potential game-changer for India's pineapple industry. With continued research and field trials, this breakthrough may pave the way for the development of **fungus-resistant pineapple varieties**, ensuring **higher yields, better fruit quality, and sustainable farming practices**.



[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**32**





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 1 – Geography

## Vanuatu in Focus: Island Nation Leads Global Push for Environmental Justice

**Context:** The Pacific island country of **Vanuatu** has recently made headlines for taking a bold step in global climate advocacy. The nation has formally approached the **International Court of Justice (ICJ)**, seeking legal recognition of **environmental destruction as “ecocide”** — a move aimed at holding polluters accountable for the degradation of nature.

This pioneering action places Vanuatu at the **forefront of international environmental diplomacy**, signaling a growing demand for legal mechanisms to address climate-related harms.

### Where is Vanuatu?

**Vanuatu** is a picturesque archipelago in the **South Pacific Ocean**, located:

- **East of northern Australia**
- **West of Fiji**
- It is part of the **Melanesian subregion** of Oceania

The **capital city** is **Port Vila**, situated on the island of **Efate**.

### Geographical Highlights:

The islands of Vanuatu are primarily of **volcanic origin**, resulting in:

- **Mountainous interiors**
- **Narrow coastal plains**
- Frequent **seismic and volcanic activity**

**Major islands** include:

- **Espiritu Santo** (largest)
- **Malakula**
- **Efate** (home to the capital)

Vanuatu's location gives it a vast **Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** in the **South Pacific**, rich in marine biodiversity and fisheries — critical to its economy and food security.

### Political and Environmental Significance:

- Vanuatu is a **parliamentary democracy** and a member of numerous international organizations, including the **United Nations**, **Pacific Islands Forum**, and **Commonwealth of Nations**.
- The country is especially vulnerable to **climate change**, with rising sea levels, cyclones, and coral bleaching posing existential threats.
- Its recent appeal to the **ICJ** underscores a growing movement among **small island developing states (SIDS)** to demand **legal accountability** from major polluting nations and industries.

### Did You Know?

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

33





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- Vanuatu is ranked as one of the **most disaster-prone countries** in the world due to its exposure to **tropical cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, and volcanic eruptions**.
- Despite its challenges, Vanuatu is known for its **rich cultural heritage**, with over **100 indigenous languages** spoken — making it one of the most **linguistically diverse countries** per capita.

## Conclusion: A Voice from the Pacific

Through its environmental leadership, **Vanuatu is amplifying the voice of vulnerable nations** on the world stage. By pushing for the recognition of **ecocide as a crime under international law**, this island nation is not only safeguarding its own future but also inspiring a **global movement for climate justice and environmental accountability**.



[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**34**



## Arctic Under Threat: Unprecedented Winter Warming Raises Global Alarms

**Context:** In February 2025, the Arctic archipelago of Svalbard experienced **unusually high air temperatures** and even **rainfall**, triggering **widespread snowmelt** and the **pooling of meltwater** — an event rarely seen in the heart of the Arctic winter. This extreme weather event highlights the growing impact of **human-induced climate change** in one of the most sensitive regions on Earth.



### Arctic Amplification: Why the Arctic is Warming Faster

The Arctic is warming **more than twice as fast** as the global average, a phenomenon known as **Arctic Amplification**. This accelerated warming is the result of multiple interconnected feedback processes:

- **Reduced Albedo Effect:** As ice and snow melt, they are replaced by **darker ocean waters and exposed land**, which **absorb more sunlight** instead of reflecting it. This **increases heat absorption**, leading to even more ice loss—a classic **positive feedback loop**.
- **Lapse Rate Feedback:** In polar regions, **greenhouse gas-induced warming** is concentrated **near the surface**, unlike in the tropics where heat disperses vertically. This makes the surface warming in the Arctic far more intense.
- **Water Vapour's Triple Threat:**
  - Acts as a **powerful greenhouse gas**
  - Creates **cloud cover** that traps heat
  - **Releases latent heat** during condensation, further **boosting temperatures**
- **Atmospheric Heat Transport:** Warmer, **moisture-laden air from the tropics** is now traveling more frequently to the Arctic, delivering additional heat and disrupting the region's energy balance.

### Consequences of Arctic Amplification: A Global Ripple Effect

#### Accelerated Climate Change:

- **Thawing permafrost** is releasing long-trapped **carbon dioxide and methane**, powerful greenhouse gases that are intensifying global warming.

#### Ecological Disruption:

- **Rain-on-snow events** in winter can remove the insulating snow cover, exposing **tundra vegetation and microbial life** to damaging freeze-thaw cycles.
- This impacts local wildlife like **caribou and Arctic foxes**, which depend on stable snow conditions for survival.

#### Impact on India and the Global South:

- **Indian Monsoon Disruption:** Research shows that **declining Arctic sea ice** is linked to **stronger, more erratic monsoons** in South Asia, increasing the frequency of **extreme rainfall events and floods**.
- **Sea-Level Rise:** Melting Arctic ice contributes to rising sea levels, threatening **coastal cities** like **Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata**, and increasing the **salinization of agricultural land**.
- **Socioeconomic Consequences:**



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **Crop losses** due to erratic weather patterns
- **Public health challenges** from heatwaves and waterborne diseases
- **Infrastructure damage** due to flooding and storms

## Did You Know?

- The Arctic is now warming at nearly **four times the global average**, according to recent satellite data — a rate that continues to outpace even the most alarming predictions.
- A study by the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** notes that Arctic amplification will continue even if **emissions are significantly reduced**, making **adaptation planning essential**.

## Conclusion: The Arctic is the Planet's Early Warning System

The **Arctic's rapid winter warming** is not a distant or isolated event — it's a **clear signal of accelerating climate breakdown**. What happens in the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic. It has far-reaching impacts on **global weather, ecosystems, food systems, and human security**.

The urgent need now is for **strong international climate action, emissions reduction, and resilient adaptation strategies** — before the Arctic, and the world, crosses irreversible tipping points.



[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**36**





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

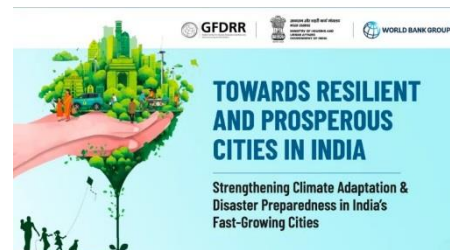
By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 3 – Investment models and Planning

## World Bank Urges Massive Investment in Green and Resilient Urban Infrastructure for India

**Context:** A recent **World Bank report**, titled ‘**Towards Resilient and Prosperous Cities in India**’, emphasizes the urgent need for India to invest **\$2.4 trillion** in **climate-resilient and green urban infrastructure** by **2050**. As Indian cities expand rapidly, the report highlights both the immense opportunity and the critical risk posed by climate change to the nation’s urban future.



### India’s Urban Transition: Growth with Vulnerabilities

India is experiencing an unprecedented urban transformation:

- In **2020**, cities were home to over **480 million people**, accounting for **more than one-third** of the national population.
- By **2050**, the urban population is projected to **double to 951 million**, making India one of the most **urbanized nations globally**.
- Between **1985 and 2015**, urban settlements in **high flood-risk zones** increased by **102%**, highlighting a trend of unsafe expansion.
- By **2030**, urban areas are expected to generate **70% of new jobs** and contribute around **75% to India’s GDP by 2050**.

This rapid growth, however, makes Indian cities increasingly vulnerable to **climate-induced shocks**.

### Climate Risks Facing Indian Cities:

Indian cities are facing a dual threat of **flooding** and **extreme heat**:

- **Flooding:** Due to climate change and increased impermeable surfaces, cities may see a **3.6 to 7-fold rise in pluvial (surface water) flooding by 2070**.
- **Heat Stress:** By **2050**, nearly **20% of working hours** in major urban centers could be lost due to **extreme heat**, directly impacting labor productivity and public health.

### A Roadmap for Climate-Resilient Urban Development

The World Bank report lays out a comprehensive action plan for Indian cities to become **climate-smart and inclusive**:

#### Risk-Informed Planning:

- Integrate **climate and disaster risk assessments** into **urban land-use planning**
- Develop **hazard-specific investment strategies** at the local level

#### Protecting the Urban Poor:

- Identify and support **vulnerable populations** in informal settlements
- Expand **local climate adaptation programs** for low-income communities

#### Sustainable Urban Expansion:

- Encourage **compact urban growth** through **transit-oriented development**
- Promote **energy-efficient technologies** such as **LED streetlights**

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**37**



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- Restrict development in **climate-sensitive zones**

## Resilient Urban Services:

- Upgrade **municipal water systems** to enhance energy and water efficiency
- Invest in **low-carbon solid waste management (SWM)** practices
- Build **cooler cities** through green roofing, urban forests, and permeable pavements

## Private Sector Participation:

- Facilitate the role of **private enterprises in risk financing**, insurance, and resilience-building
- Create **public-private partnerships** for green infrastructure development

## Did You Know?

India's cities already account for more than **two-thirds of energy demand**, and with rising temperatures, **energy consumption in urban cooling alone could triple by 2050**. Investing in **green infrastructure today** could drastically cut future energy costs and emissions.

## Conclusion: Investing Today for a Sustainable Tomorrow

India stands at a critical crossroads. With **urbanization accelerating** and **climate threats intensifying**, the choices made today will define the **livability, safety, and prosperity** of its cities for decades to come. The **\$2.4 trillion investment in resilient, inclusive, and low-carbon urban infrastructure** is not just a necessity — it's an opportunity to build cities that are **future-ready, climate-resilient, and economically vibrant**.

freedom UPSC  
TOGETHER WE SCALE HEIGHTS

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**38**



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 2 – Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice

## Kashi Declaration: Paving the Way for a Drug-Free India

**Context:** India took a significant step toward building a **Nasha Mukht Bharat (Drug-Free India)** with the adoption of the **Kashi Declaration**, a comprehensive five-year strategy unveiled during the **Youth Spiritual Summit in Varanasi**. The declaration represents a collective national vision to combat the growing menace of drug abuse through a **holistic and inclusive approach**, blending governance, spirituality, technology, and social reform.



### Highlights of the Kashi Declaration:

The **Kashi Declaration** signals a paradigm shift in how India addresses substance abuse—not merely as a legal issue but as a **multi-dimensional public health and societal challenge**. Key elements include:

- **Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society Approach:** Recognizing that no single entity can solve the crisis, the declaration calls for **coordinated efforts** across ministries, civil society, and local communities.
- **Integration of Spiritual, Cultural, and Educational Tools:** Leveraging India's rich spiritual heritage, the declaration promotes **mindfulness, value-based education, and community support** as preventive measures against addiction.
- **Technology-Driven Solutions:** It advocates using digital platforms to **track, prevent, and rehabilitate**, offering real-time support to affected individuals.
- **Institutional Framework:** Proposes the creation of a **Joint National Committee**, annual performance reviews, and a centralized **national support platform** to connect addicts with rehabilitation services and emotional support.

### Understanding India's Drug Abuse Crisis:

The scale of India's drug challenge is staggering. A 2019 report by **AIIMS** and the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment** provides alarming statistics:

- Over **16 crore people** consume alcohol, with **5.7 crore** requiring treatment.
- Around **2.3 crore Indians** use **cannabis and opioids**.
- **1.18 crore** individuals between ages 10 and 75 use **sedatives** (non-medically).
- **Inhalants**, especially among children and teens, show a **higher prevalence** (1.17%) than among adults.

These figures underscore the urgent need for **multi-layered intervention strategies** that not only penalize but **educate, heal, and reintegrate**.

### Root Causes Behind the Drug Menace in India:

India's drug problem is fueled by a mix of geographical, social, and systemic factors:

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

39



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **Strategic Location:** India is sandwiched between the **Golden Crescent** (Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan) and the **Golden Triangle** (Myanmar, Laos, Thailand)—two of the world's largest drug-producing regions.
- **Cross-Border Smuggling:** Border states like **Punjab, Manipur, and Assam** are hotspots for illegal drug entry due to porous borders.
- **Youth Vulnerability:** Unemployment, academic pressure, peer influence, and curiosity contribute significantly to drug initiation among youth.
- **Weak Enforcement Mechanisms:** **Overburdened law enforcement**, corruption, and inadequate surveillance hamper effective control.
- **Easy Access:** Drugs are now available via **online markets (including the darknet)**, local dealers, and even certain pharmacies.
- **Social Breakdown:** Dysfunctional families, **mental health issues**, and isolation are major contributors to substance dependence.

## Impact of Drug Abuse on India's Socio-Economic Fabric:

Drug addiction doesn't just harm individuals—it damages entire communities and the nation's core:

- **Economic Loss:** Drug abuse **reduces workforce productivity**, strains healthcare systems, and erodes the country's human capital.
- **Public Health Crisis:** Widespread drug use is linked to **mental illness**, spread of **HIV/AIDS**, and chronic diseases.
- **Family and Social Disruption:** Addiction causes **domestic violence**, family breakdown, and leads to **stigmatization** and social alienation.
- **National Security Threat:** The **drug trade** finances **terrorist organizations**, strengthens **organized crime**, and destabilizes youth, weakening internal security.

## India's Policy Response and Ongoing Initiatives:

India has adopted a **multi-pronged approach** to address the drug problem at national and international levels:

### National-Level Interventions:

- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985:** A legal framework that **prohibits the production, sale, possession, and consumption** of banned substances, with stringent punishments.
- **Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan (2020):** A flagship campaign focusing on **awareness, community outreach, and behavior change**, operating in hundreds of vulnerable districts.
- **Anti-Narcotics Task Forces (ANTFs):** State-level enforcement bodies to enhance local law enforcement capabilities.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

40





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **DarkNet Monitoring Cell:** A unit under the **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB)** that monitors **illicit** online drug sales.

## Global Collaborations:

- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC):** India works with UNODC to share best practices, promote prevention, and tackle transnational trafficking.
- **International Narcotics Control Board (INCB):** India's compliance with global treaties is monitored and aligned with international standards.

## Way Forward: Toward a Truly Nasha Mukht Bharat

India's rising drug crisis demands more than just regulation—it calls for a **massive cultural and policy transformation**. The **Kashi Declaration** provides the framework, but **implementation is key**.

## To truly eradicate drug abuse, India must:

- **Empower youth through education, employment, and mental health support**
- **Foster grassroots movements** involving **religious leaders, educators, and social workers**
- **Expand rehabilitation services** with a focus on **dignity and reintegration**
- **Use technology** for early intervention, anonymous reporting, and support delivery

## Conclusion: A Nation United Against Addiction:

The **Kashi Declaration** is more than a policy—it's a **call to conscience**. It affirms that drug addiction is not just a personal failing, but a **national challenge** requiring empathy, coordination, and sustained action. As India envisions a **Viksit Bharat by 2047**, building a **drug-free society** is an essential step toward achieving a **healthier, safer, and more empowered nation**.

[Download Our Application](#)



***Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam***

Page No

41



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 3 – Environment and Ecology

## Guryul Ravine: A Prehistoric Treasure Under Threat

**Context:** The **Geological Survey of India (GSI)** has raised serious concerns about the **deteriorating condition** of the **Guryul Ravine fossil site**, located in **Khonmoh**, near **Srinagar**, Jammu and Kashmir. In its latest warning, the GSI emphasized that this globally significant geological heritage is facing a **“serious threat”** due to human activity, negligence, and lack of proper conservation measures.



This ancient site, often hailed as a **natural archive of Earth's prehistoric past**, is now at risk of being lost forever unless **urgent preservation efforts** are undertaken.

### Guryul Ravine: India's Window into Earth's Deep History

The **Guryul Ravine**, situated in the **Vihi district of Kashmir**, is not just a regional landmark—it's a site of **global geological importance**. This extraordinary fossil-rich ravine contains layers of sediment that provide critical evidence of the **Permian-Triassic extinction event**, the most devastating mass extinction in Earth's history, dating back nearly **260 million years**.

### Key Features of Guryul Ravine:

- **Contains fossils from the Permian-Triassic boundary**, offering insights into how life on Earth was nearly wiped out.
- Hosts what is believed to be the **world's earliest recorded tsunami event**, with physical imprints still visible in the **exposed strata**.
- Lies adjacent to **Dachigam National Park** and is part of the **Khonmoh Conservation Reserve**, a sensitive ecological area.

The fossil layers here help scientists **reconstruct past climates, track extinction patterns**, and understand **geological transitions** over millions of years.

### What Was the Permian-Triassic Extinction Event?

Often referred to as the **“Great Dying”**, the **Permian-Triassic extinction** occurred around **251.9 million years ago**, marking a pivotal boundary between the **Paleozoic and Mesozoic eras** and the **Permian and Triassic periods**.

### Significance of the Event:

- **Over 90% of marine species** and **around 70% of terrestrial vertebrates** vanished.
- Triggered by massive **volcanic eruptions, global warming, acid rain, and ocean anoxia**.
- Reshaped the evolutionary trajectory of life, eventually paving the way for the rise of **dinosaurs and mammals**.

This event is regarded as the **most catastrophic extinction in Earth's history**, even surpassing the later extinction that wiped out the dinosaurs.

### Why Guryul Ravine Matters to the World:

Globally, there are only a few places where the **Permian-Triassic boundary** is so well exposed and preserved. Guryul Ravine offers:

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

42



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **Exceptional geological clarity**, enabling researchers to pinpoint extinction-related events.
- A **research goldmine** for studying ancient tsunamis, climate shifts, and ecosystem collapses.
- A unique opportunity for India to **promote geotourism** and **scientific education** by conserving and showcasing this natural heritage.

## Current Threats to the Site:

Despite its immense scientific value, the Guryul Ravine is under threat due to:

- **Unregulated construction**, quarrying, and **illegal stone mining**.
- Lack of protective fencing or on-site **supervision by authorities**.
- **Encroachment and habitat degradation** in surrounding conservation areas.
- Neglect in recognizing it officially as a **geo-heritage or UNESCO site**.

If these issues are not addressed, the **irreplaceable fossil evidence** and geological structures could be **permanently lost**.

## The Way Forward: Conservation and Recognition

To safeguard this priceless natural archive, experts recommend:

- Immediate declaration of **Guryul Ravine as a National Geo-Heritage Site**.
- Involvement of **local communities and educational institutions** in its protection.
- Establishment of a **fossil park or research center** to promote scientific tourism.
- Application for **UNESCO Global Geopark** status to bring international attention and funding.

## Conclusion: A Legacy Worth Preserving

The **Guryul Ravine fossil site** is not just a Kashmiri or Indian treasure—it's a **global monument to Earth's ancient history**. It stands as a silent witness to one of the most critical turning points in the evolution of life. The recent warning by the GSI should serve as a call to action for conservationists, policymakers, and citizens alike. Protecting Guryul Ravine means preserving a **timeline of survival, extinction, and rebirth**—a story that belongs to all of humanity.



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 2 – Indian Constitution

## Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar Resigns: A Historic Move Amid Health Concerns

**Context:** In a surprising turn of events, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar tendered his **resignation on July 21**, coinciding with the opening day of the **Monsoon Session of Parliament**. Citing **health-related issues** and following medical advice, Dhankhar submitted his resignation to **President Droupadi Murmu**, invoking **Article 67(a)** of the **Indian Constitution**.



With this step, he becomes only the **third Vice President in India's history** to resign before completing his term—after **V. V. Giri** and **R. Venkataraman**, both of whom stepped down to contest in **presidential elections**.

### Constitutional Framework: Resignation of the Vice President

Under **Article 67(a)** of the Constitution, the **Vice President** has the right to **resign at any time** by submitting a written letter to the **President of India**. The resignation takes effect **immediately upon acceptance**, with no further approval needed.

Dhankhar, who assumed office in **August 2022**, resigned roughly **two years into his five-year tenure**, well ahead of the scheduled end in **2027**.

### What Happens Next? Succession and Parliamentary Functioning

The Indian Constitution **does not provide for an acting Vice President**. Following a resignation:

- The post **remains vacant** until a new Vice President is elected.
- Meanwhile, the **Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha**, currently **Harivansh Narayan Singh**, will perform the Vice President's **ex-officio** role as **Chairman** of the Upper House.
- This arrangement ensures the **Rajya Sabha continues functioning without disruption**.

### Timeline for Vice-Presidential Election: What the Law Says

Unlike the Presidential office, where elections must be held within **six months**, there is **no fixed deadline** for electing a new Vice President. The law mandates that the **Election Commission** conduct the election "**as soon as possible**" after a vacancy arises.

- The election will be held under the **Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952**.
- The **Secretary-General of Parliament** (on a rotational basis from either House) will serve as the **Returning Officer**.
- Once elected, the **new Vice President** will begin a **fresh five-year term**, not just the remainder of Dhankhar's term—unlike some constitutional roles where the successor serves only the remaining period.

### Who Can Contest? Eligibility Criteria for Vice President of India

As per **Article 66** of the Constitution, a candidate for the office of Vice President must:

- Be a **citizen of India**
- Be **at least 35 years of age**
- Be **eligible to be elected as a member of the Rajya Sabha**

Download Our Application



Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam

Page No

44





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **Not hold any office of profit** under the Government of India or any state/local authority

These criteria are designed to maintain the **integrity and impartiality** of the high office.

## Election Mechanism: A Parliamentary Affair

The Vice President is elected through an **electoral college** consisting solely of **members from both Houses of Parliament**, including **nominated members**.

- The election is conducted via **secret ballot** using the **proportional representation system** with a **single transferable vote**.
- Members rank candidates by preference.
- A candidate must secure a **quota** of votes—calculated by dividing total valid votes by two and adding one—to win.
- If no one meets the quota in the first round, **the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated**, and second-preference votes are redistributed. This process continues until a winner emerges.

State assemblies do **not participate** in this process, making it **distinct from the Presidential election**.

## The Role of the Vice President: A Pillar of Parliamentary Democracy

The **Vice President of India** holds the second-highest constitutional office in the country. Though not part of any legislature, the Vice President plays a **vital role in parliamentary proceedings** as the **Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha**.

- Ensures **discipline, order, and procedural conduct** in the Upper House.
- In the event of a **vacancy in the office of the President**—due to resignation, death, or inability—the Vice President serves as **Acting President** until a new one is elected.
- Acts as a **symbol of federal unity** and a key constitutional figure for maintaining **checks and balances** in governance.

## Looking Ahead: What This Means for India

The resignation of Jagdeep Dhankhar has added a new chapter to India's political and constitutional history. As the nation prepares to elect a new Vice President, the spotlight will be on **Parliament's choice**, political alignments, and potential contenders for the prestigious post.

This event also opens up a **larger conversation about health transparency, leadership transitions**, and the **functionality of constitutional offices** in modern India. The smooth process laid out by the Constitution ensures that **democratic continuity and institutional stability remain intact**, even in moments of abrupt change.

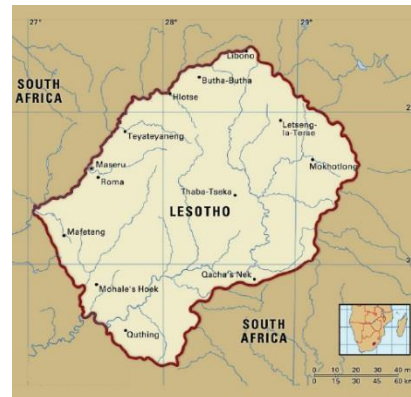


## India Strengthens Ties with Lesotho: A Mountain Kingdom in Focus

**Context:** India is poised to enhance its **bilateral cooperation with Lesotho**, following the visit of the **Indian Minister of State for External Affairs** to the southern African nation. This visit marks a key step in deepening political, economic, and developmental ties with **Lesotho**, a country that holds strategic importance in the **Southern African region**.

### Lesotho: A Unique Landlocked Nation in Southern Africa

**Lesotho**, with its capital at **Maseru**, is a **landlocked country completely surrounded by South Africa**, making it one of only three such countries in the world. Despite its size, Lesotho stands out for its **distinct topography**, **strategic water resources**, and **stable democratic governance** in a complex regional landscape.



### Geographical Marvel: The 'Kingdom in the Sky'

Often referred to as the **"Kingdom in the Sky,"** **Lesotho** is the **only country in the world located entirely above 1,000 metres** in elevation. Its dramatic landscape is dominated by **rugged mountains and high plateaus**, making it not just a scenic wonder but also a unique ecological zone in Africa.

### Key Geographical Highlights:

- **Mountains cover over two-thirds** of Lesotho's total area.
- The **highest point** is **Thabana Ntlenyana**, standing tall at **3,482 metres**, and also recognized as the **highest peak in Southern Africa**.
- **Drakensberg Mountains** form the **eastern boundary**, while the **Maloti Mountains** stretch across the **north-south axis** of the country.

This elevation gives Lesotho a **cooler climate** than most African nations and influences its agriculture, biodiversity, and settlement patterns.

### White Gold: Lesotho's Most Precious Natural Asset

Among Lesotho's key natural resources, **water is the most valuable**, often referred to as **"White Gold."** The country's high-altitude rivers and abundant rainfall make it a **regional water hub**.

- The **Lesotho Highlands Water Project (LHWP)**, a collaborative initiative with South Africa, channels vast quantities of water to meet urban and industrial demands in **Gauteng province**, including **Johannesburg and Pretoria**.
- In return, Lesotho earns **revenue and electricity** from the hydro-power facilities associated with the project.

This makes Lesotho a **critical water security partner** in the region, and a potential area of collaboration with countries like India on **water management and sustainable development**.

### India-Lesotho Relations: A Partnership with Potential

India and Lesotho share warm diplomatic relations, with India offering support in areas such as **healthcare, education, capacity building, and IT infrastructure**. The visit by India's Minister of State underscores:

- **Growing South-South Cooperation**



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- India's commitment to **Africa's development agenda**
- Potential for collaboration in **solar energy, digital connectivity, skills training, and agricultural innovation**

India also provides **scholarships and technical training** to students and professionals from Lesotho under the **Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)** program.

## Conclusion: Mountainous Yet Connected

**Lesotho**, with its towering landscapes and flowing rivers, offers not just natural beauty but **geostrategic and developmental significance**. As India looks to build stronger ties with African nations, Lesotho stands out as a **partner in progress**, where diplomacy meets elevation—literally and figuratively. This renewed engagement paves the way for **mutual growth, sustainability, and regional stability** in the years to come.



[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

47





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 3 – Economy

## India's Coal Sector on the Path to Sustainability and Self-Reliance

**Context:** India, home to the **world's fifth-largest coal reserves**, relies on coal to meet nearly **55% of its energy demands**. As the nation moves toward **cleaner energy and economic resilience**, the government has laid out a **comprehensive strategy** to make the coal sector more **sustainable, competitive, and environmentally compliant**, while also aiming to **reduce dependence on coal imports**.



### Sustainability-Driven Transformation in Coal Mining:

To align with **environmental goals** and global climate commitments, India is pushing for a **green overhaul** of its coal sector through several forward-looking initiatives:

#### Eco-Restoration and Green Credits:

- **Afforestation of mined-out areas** is being actively pursued under **bio-reclamation efforts**.
- Coal and lignite **PSUs are participating in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change's Green Credit Programme**, incentivizing ecological restoration.

#### Sustainable Use of Mine Water:

- **Treated mine water** is being reused for **community irrigation, industrial needs** (such as **dust suppression and firefighting**), and **ecological services** like **aquifer recharge and fish farming**.

#### Utilizing Overburden for Sand Extraction:

- Sand derived from **overburden waste material** is being repurposed for **construction activities and stowing operations**, reducing pressure on **river sand ecosystems** and promoting **circular mining practices**.

#### Adoption of Blast-Free Technologies:

- Modern technologies such as **Surface Miners, Continuous Miners, and Rippers** are replacing traditional **blasting and drilling methods**, resulting in **lower emissions, noise pollution, and enhanced worker safety**.

#### Clean Coal and Renewable Integration:

- Strategic focus is on **Coal Gasification, Coal-to-Liquid (CTL), and Coal Bed Methane (CBM)** to **minimize carbon output and create cleaner alternatives**.
- These efforts complement India's **commitment to achieving 500 GW of non-fossil fuel energy capacity by 2030**.

#### Moving Towards Import Independence:

To cut down reliance on **imported coal**, especially for **power and steel production**, the government is implementing multiple strategies:

#### Boosting Domestic Production:

- **Accelerated allocation of coal blocks and enhanced private sector participation** are driving local production.
- A dedicated **Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC)** was formed to streamline efforts for **coal import substitution**.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

48





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



## Upgrading Supply Chain Infrastructure:

- **New railway corridors, modernized coal transport systems, and First Mile Connectivity (FMC) projects** are improving the coal evacuation process from mines to consumers, reducing logistical delays and transport emissions.

## Financial Reforms Under SHAKTI Policy:

- Under the **SHAKTI (Scheme for Harnessing and Allocating Koyla Transparently in India)** policy, **import-based coal power plants** can now **procure domestic coal more easily**, ensuring **energy security** without added foreign dependence.

## Coking Coal Mission for Steel Industry:

- India has launched a dedicated **Coking Coal Mission** to ramp up the **domestic supply of coking coal**, a crucial raw material in steel production, reducing import bills and strengthening the **Make in India** initiative.

## Conclusion: Balancing Growth with Green Responsibility

India's coal sector is undergoing a **paradigm shift**—from being a carbon-intensive industry to a **technologically upgraded and environmentally conscious sector**. With a strong emphasis on **sustainability, domestic capacity building, and resource efficiency**, the sector is being prepared to meet both the **energy demands of a growing economy** and the **climate goals of a responsible global player**.

freedom UPSC  
TOGETHER WE SCALE HEIGHTS

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

49



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 1 – Indian Society & Culture

## Hatti Tribe: Preserving Heritage and Traditions in the Himalayan Foothills

**Context:** In a recent social event that drew significant public attention, **two brothers from the Hatti tribe in Himachal Pradesh** married the same woman—reviving the **centuries-old tradition of polyandry**, a practice still found in some isolated tribal pockets. **Hundreds gathered** to witness the rare union, spotlighting the tribe's unique cultural identity.



### Who Are the Hatti? A Community Rooted in 'Haats'

The **Hatti tribe** derives its name from "**haats**" — traditional village markets where they **sold home-grown crops, vegetables, livestock, and wool**. This trade-centric lifestyle shaped their **tight-knit social structure** and distinctive **community identity** over generations.

- **Traditional Attire:** Hatti men are easily recognized by their **distinctive white headgear**, worn proudly during festivals, weddings, and community gatherings.
- **Geographic Spread:** They inhabit the **Himachal-Uttarakhand border**, particularly along the **Giri and Tons river basins**, both important **tributaries of the Yamuna River**.

### Two Regions, One Culture: Hatti Clans Across States

The Hatti community is primarily split into **two major regional groups**:

1. **Trans-Giri Region** – Located in **Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh**
2. **Jaunsar-Bawar Region** – Situated in **Uttarakhand**

Despite residing in two different states, **both groups share similar customs, rituals, and dialects**. Intermarriages are common, and community bonds remain strong across state lines.

- The community is governed by a **traditional tribal council** called '**Khumbli**', which handles **local disputes, marriage approvals, and social matters**—much like a customary judiciary.

### Life and Livelihood: Agriculture as a Way of Life

The **Hatti people primarily depend on agriculture**, with their **climate favoring cash crop cultivation** such as **ginger, fruits, pulses, and millets**. Farming is often **subsistence-based**, though market trading remains a vital economic activity.

- The community still practices **barter exchange in remote areas**, reflecting their **semi-traditional economy**.
- Some Hatti families are also involved in **seasonal migration** for labor in towns and cities.

### Population and Political Recognition:

- As per the **2011 Census**, the Hatti community numbered around **2.5 lakh**.
- **Current estimates place their population at approximately 3 lakh**.

### In a historic development:

- In **2023**, the **Hatti community of Himachal Pradesh** was granted **Scheduled Tribe (ST) status**, fulfilling a **long-standing demand** and promising greater access to **educational, political, and economic opportunities**.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

50



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- The **Jaunsar-Bawar region in Uttarakhand** had already received **tribal recognition back in 1967**.

This ST status opens doors to **affirmative action benefits**, preservation of traditional practices, and **increased representation in policymaking**.

## Conclusion: A Tradition-Rich Community at the Crossroads of Change

The **Hatti tribe** is a striking example of a community that has **retained its deep-rooted traditions**, while slowly adapting to the **modern socio-political landscape**. From **ancestral customs like polyandry** to **newfound constitutional recognition**, the Hattis stand at the **intersection of heritage and progress**.



[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**51**



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

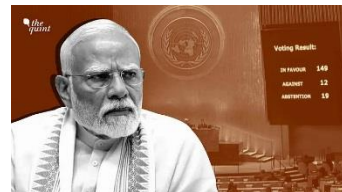
By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 2 – Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice

## India's Strategic Shift at the UN: Rising Abstentions Reflect New Diplomatic Approach

**Context:** India's voting behavior at the **United Nations** has undergone a notable transformation over the decades. A recent analysis of over **5,500 UN resolutions** from **1946 to June 2025** reveals a striking trend: the percentage of 'yes' votes by India has dropped to just **56%**—the **lowest since 1955**—while **abstentions** have reached an **all-time high of 44%**.



This marked shift is more than a statistical anomaly; it signals a **strategic recalibration** of India's foreign policy in response to an increasingly **polarised global order** and the complexities of modern multilateral diplomacy.

### Historical Evolution of India's UN Voting Patterns:

India's voting trajectory at the UN can be traced across four distinct eras:

- **1946 to Late 1960s:** A **volatile phase**, with 'yes' votes ranging from **20% to 100%**. Abstentions remained between **0% and 40%**.
- **1970 to 1994:** A period of **greater consistency**, with India supporting **74% to 96%** of resolutions. Abstentions were relatively low, at **8% to 19%**.
- **Mid-1990s to 2019:** The country adopted a **stable voting stance**, maintaining 'yes' votes in the range of **75% to 83%**, and abstentions between **10% and 17%**.
- **Post-2019:** A **dramatic shift** began, culminating in **2025** with a **record 44% abstention rate** and a significant fall in 'yes' votes.

### Why Is India Abstaining More Often?

1. **The Rise of Global Polarisation:** As geopolitical tensions escalate—particularly among the **United States, China, and Russia**—India faces mounting pressure to take sides. However, as a nation committed to **strategic autonomy**, India increasingly opts for **abstention** to maintain a **neutral, independent posture**.
2. **Complexity of Modern Resolutions:** Former Indian diplomats describe today's resolutions as "**Christmas trees**"—laden with multiple provisions, some of which may **conflict with India's interests or principles**. This structural ambiguity makes **outright support or opposition difficult**, rendering abstention a **pragmatic alternative**.
3. **Assertion of Sovereign Judgment:** Abstention is no longer seen as indecision. For a country positioning itself as a **responsible middle power**, abstaining can be a **diplomatic signal**—a way to express **reservations** without burning bridges or aligning with controversial stances.

### Strategic Abstention in Action:

Although the analysis doesn't cite specific resolutions, India's recent abstentions have commonly occurred on issues like:

- The **Russia-Ukraine conflict**, where India has abstained to **preserve ties** with both the West and Moscow
- **Human rights resolutions** on Myanmar or China, where abstention helps **avoid direct confrontation**

Download Our Application



Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam

Page No

52





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- The **Israel–Palestine** question, where abstention reflects India's attempt to balance its **historic support for Palestine** with **growing ties with Israel**

Each instance reflects a careful balance between **principle and pragmatism**.

## Global Implications of India's Voting Shift:

1. **Reinforcing Strategic Autonomy:** By abstaining more frequently, India is reasserting its **non-aligned identity**, distancing itself from the rigid blocs of the Cold War era while embracing a **multi-aligned** approach suited for the 21st century.
2. **Potential Diplomatic Tensions:** This strategy, however, is not without risks. Allies—especially in the West—may view India's **abstentions on value-based issues** as a lack of moral clarity or political commitment.
3. **Balancing Influence and Credibility:** India must strike a fine balance: using abstention to preserve diplomatic room to manoeuvre, while also projecting itself as a **credible, responsible global actor**.

## Looking Ahead: What This Means for India's Global Ambitions

India's increasing reliance on **abstention** aligns with its broader ambition to secure a **permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC)**. As India seeks to play a **greater role in global governance**, its approach to voting reflects a desire to be seen as a **balancer, not a follower**.

In an age of **multipolarity and fractured alliances**, abstention gives India the space to:

- **Preserve critical bilateral relationships**
- **Avoid entanglement in power struggles**
- **Express nuanced foreign policy positions**

## Extra Insight: How India Compares Globally

- **China** also often abstains, particularly on humanitarian interventions.
- **Brazil and South Africa**, like India, use abstention as a tool of strategic flexibility.
- **Western nations**, in contrast, generally have lower abstention rates and higher 'yes' votes, reflecting alliance-based voting.

## Conclusion: A Recalibration, Not a Retreat

India's record number of abstentions in **2025** is not a sign of retreat from international responsibility. Rather, it reflects a **more mature, strategic diplomatic posture** in a world where clarity is often elusive and stakes are high.



## Shettihalli Wildlife Sanctuary Under Threat: Legal Breach Sparks Conservation Concerns

**Context:** The **Shettihalli Wildlife Sanctuary** in **Karnataka** is at the center of a major environmental controversy. The **Karnataka state government** has allegedly violated provisions of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, and **Supreme Court directives** by approving a proposal to **denotify nearly 300 sq. km** of this ecologically sensitive area.



Shockingly, the **National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)** failed to uphold its responsibility by not ensuring that the lost forest area is **compensated through equivalent protected land**, as required by legal and conservation norms.

### A Sanctuary Rich in Biodiversity:

Declared a **wildlife sanctuary on 23rd November 1974**, Shettihalli spans a diverse and ecologically vital region in **Shimoga (Shivamogga) district** of Karnataka, covering an area of **395.6 square kilometres**. It is home to a **unique blend of flora and fauna**, water bodies, and bird habitats.

One of its most notable features is the **Tunga Anicut Dam**, located within the sanctuary, which serves as a refuge for **otters and numerous species of water birds**.

The sanctuary also encompasses the **Mandagadde Bird Sanctuary**, situated on a **small island in the River Tunga**, a haven for **migratory and resident bird species**.

### Ecology and Vegetation:

The forest type in Shettihalli includes:

- Dry deciduous
- Moist deciduous
- Semi-evergreen forests

These forest types together support a wide array of **plant biodiversity**. Prominent species include:

- Teak (*Tectona grandis*)
- Silver Oak
- Indian Thorny Bamboo
- Calcutta Bamboo
- Asan
- Amla (Indian gooseberry)
- Sweet Indrajao, among others

### Home to Diverse Wildlife:

Shettihalli is known for its **rich wildlife population**, playing host to several **flagship and endangered species**.

### Mammals Found in the Sanctuary:

- Tiger

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

54



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- Leopard
- Sloth Bear
- Gaur (Indian Bison)
- Asian Elephant
- Sambar Deer
- Spotted Deer
- Wild Dogs (Dhole)
- Jackal
- Bonnet Macaque
- Common Langur
- Wild Pig

Avian Diversity:

The sanctuary is a paradise for bird lovers, sheltering species like:

- Hornbills
- Peafowl
- Kingfishers
- Parakeets
- Junglefowl
- Bulbuls
- Doves and Pigeons
- Flycatchers
- Swallows
- Woodpeckers
- Partridges
- Babblers
- Munias

freedom UPSC  
TOGETHER WE SCALE HEIGHTS

Human Settlements and Historical Context:

Interestingly, Shettihalli also accommodates **numerous human settlements**, many of which consist of families **displaced during the construction of the Sharavathi Dam** in the 1960s. These communities have coexisted with the sanctuary ecosystem for decades, though pressures of human activity remain a **challenge to conservation efforts**.

Conservation Concerns and Future Risks:

The proposed **denotification of 300 sq. km** could significantly damage the sanctuary's **ecological balance**, especially at a time when **biodiversity loss and climate change** are accelerating.

Experts warn that such reductions can:

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

55



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- Fragment animal corridors
- Threaten the survival of **keystone species**
- Reduce the sanctuary's **climate resilience**
- Open doors to **illegal encroachments and developmental pressures**

Moreover, failure to provide **compensatory afforestation or alternate protected areas** violates the **principle of "no net loss"** in biodiversity.

## Why Shettihalli Matters More Than Ever:

As India faces increasing environmental challenges, **protected areas like Shettihalli** are crucial not just for wildlife, but for the **ecological security of the region**. They support:

- **Carbon sequestration**
- **Soil and water conservation**
- **Livelihoods through eco-tourism**
- **Flood regulation and microclimatic stability**

## Conclusion: A Call for Stronger Action

The developments surrounding Shettihalli Wildlife Sanctuary underline the need for **stronger environmental governance** and **accountable decision-making**. The sanctuary is not just a forest—it is a **living ecosystem**, a **biodiversity hotspot**, and a **natural heritage site** that deserves protection.

freedom UPSC  
TOGETHER WE SCALE HEIGHTS

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**56**





## Lyriothemis abrahami: A Stunning New Dragonfly Species Discovered in Kerala

**Context:** A remarkable discovery has enriched India's biodiversity records: a **new species of dragonfly**, named *Lyriothemis abrahami*, has been officially identified in the **forests of Kerala**. Previously mistaken for the closely resembling *Lyriothemis flava*, this species has now been correctly distinguished and documented, showcasing the importance of **detailed taxonomic studies** in understanding our ecosystems.



### Where Nature Hides Her Secrets:

*Lyriothemis abrahami* was found breeding in **small, water-filled tree holes**, a rare microhabitat in the dense **tropical forests** of Kerala. The species thrives across various forest zones—ranging from **lowland rainforests** to **mid-elevation evergreen and deciduous forests**, at altitudes between **50 m and 1,100 m** above sea level.

This dragonfly's ability to inhabit such specific and often overlooked habitats highlights the **rich yet fragile biodiversity** of the **Western Ghats**, a global biodiversity hotspot.

### A Dragonfly with Striking Features:

This species stands out not only for its ecological uniqueness but also for its **distinct physical traits**:

- **Sexual Dimorphism:** Males and females exhibit marked physical differences—a rare feature in many dragonfly species.
- **Males:** Noted for their **uniquely shaped hamules** (secondary genitalia used in mating).
- **Females:** Feature **jet-black bodies** adorned with **striking yellow triangular spots**, offering a visual treat and easy identification in the wild.

### Boosting Kerala's Biodiversity Count:

With the discovery of *Lyriothemis abrahami*, Kerala's total **odonate species count** has risen to **191**, of which a significant **78 species are endemic** to the region. This highlights **Kerala's crucial role** in conserving India's dragonfly and damselfly diversity and underscores the need to continue biodiversity research in lesser-known forest habitats.

### Ecological Importance of Dragonflies:

Dragonflies, such as *Lyriothemis abrahami*, are **key ecological indicators**. Their presence signals the **health of forest and freshwater ecosystems**. Here's why they're vital:

- They are **apex insect predators**, feeding on mosquitoes, flies, and other pest insects.
- They play a role in **controlling vector-borne diseases** by keeping mosquito populations in check.
- Their sensitivity to environmental changes makes them excellent **bioindicators** of **climate shifts, pollution, and habitat degradation**.

In short, when dragonflies thrive, it often means the **ecosystem is thriving** too.

**More Than Just a Beautiful Insect:** The discovery of *Lyriothemis abrahami* is a reminder of the **hidden wonders of the forest** and the importance of continued field research and conservation. As we uncover more such species, it becomes clearer that **protecting habitats like the Western Ghats** is not just about saving wildlife—it's about **preserving ecological balance, human health, and the natural heritage of future generations**.



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 3 – Science & Technology

## INVICTUS Programme: Pioneering Europe's Hypersonic Flight Future

**Context:** The **European Space Agency (ESA)**, in collaboration with UK-based **Frazer-Nash Consultancy**, has officially launched the **INVICTUS research programme**—a visionary project aiming to develop cutting-edge **hypersonic flight technologies** for the next generation of **reusable aerospace vehicles**.

This initiative marks a significant step toward creating **horizontal launch platforms** capable of operating at extreme speeds, redefining the future of space access and high-speed atmospheric travel.



### What is the INVICTUS Programme?

The **INVICTUS programme** is designed to develop and demonstrate **advanced hypersonic technologies**. At its core is a fully **reusable experimental aerospace vehicle** capable of flying at **Mach 5**—that's **five times the speed of sound**.

The programme is funded through ESA's **General Support Technology Programme (GSTP)** and **Technology Development Element (TDE)**, both of which support **strategic innovation** in European space technology.

### Key Features of the Hypersonic Vehicle:

- **Horizontal Take-Off Capability:** Unlike traditional rockets, the INVICTUS vehicle will launch and land like an aircraft, making it more versatile and reusable.
- **Mach 5 Speed:** Designed to sustain speeds exceeding **6,000 km/h**, the vehicle will operate in the **hypersonic regime**, significantly reducing travel and launch times.
- **Modular Design:** The vehicle will be **upgradable**, allowing for the **interchange of propulsion systems, materials, and software** across various flight test campaigns.
- **Sustained Atmospheric Flight:** Aimed at mastering long-duration flight at hypersonic speeds within Earth's atmosphere—essential for both **spaceplane concepts** and **high-speed air travel**.

### Propulsion Breakthrough: Hydrogen-Fuelled Innovation

One of the most transformative aspects of the INVICTUS programme is its focus on a **hydrogen-fuelled, precooled air-breathing propulsion system**. This technology is:

- **Eco-friendly:** Hydrogen combustion produces **zero carbon emissions**, making it a **sustainable alternative** to conventional jet fuels.
- **Highly Efficient:** Air-breathing systems reduce the need for onboard oxidisers, increasing fuel efficiency and payload capacity.
- **Scalable for Future Applications:** Suitable for a variety of missions, from **hypersonic transport** to **orbital launch platforms**.

This propulsion approach could revolutionize **aerospace engineering** by bridging the gap between traditional aircraft and space vehicles.

### Building on ESA's Past Innovations:

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

58



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



The INVICTUS initiative builds upon a foundation of **previous ESA-led technology demonstrations**, integrating lessons from **earlier high-speed flight experiments**. It will provide a **testbed for European industry, academia, and agencies** to validate and refine **emerging hypersonic systems** in real-world conditions.

## Why INVICTUS Matters: Strategic and Technological Impact

- **Boosting Europe's Aerospace Competitiveness:** INVICTUS positions Europe as a global leader in hypersonic technology, alongside powers like the US, China, and Russia.
- **Dual-Use Potential:** Technologies developed could have both **civilian and defence applications**, including **rapid global mobility** and **spaceplane operations**.
- **Advancing Reusability:** With the space industry shifting towards **cost-effective, reusable platforms**, INVICTUS aligns with the vision of **sustainable space access**.

## Did You Know?

**Mach 5 speed** means travelling over **1.6 kilometres per second**—fast enough to cross the Atlantic in under an hour. Mastering such speeds with reusable, air-breathing vehicles could revolutionize **space tourism, satellite launches**, and even **intercontinental travel**.

## Looking Ahead: A New Chapter in Aerospace Exploration

The **INVICTUS programme** isn't just a research effort—it's a bold **technological leap** toward the future of aerospace mobility. By blending **reusability, sustainability, and speed**, INVICTUS is set to reshape how we think about **spaceflight and high-speed atmospheric travel** in the decades to come.

freedom UPSC  
TOGETHER WE SCALE HEIGHTS

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

59





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 3 – Economy

## Why Food Inflation Is Set to Stay Low in India

**Context:** In a positive economic development, **India's consumer price index (CPI) inflation eased to 2.1% in June 2025**, placing it **below inflation rates in the US (2.7%) and the UK (3.6%)**. Even more striking was the trend in **food inflation**, which **contracted by 1.1%** in India, while food prices **rose by 3% in the US and 4.5% in the UK**.



This marks **India's lowest food and retail inflation since January 2019**, offering much-needed relief to households and the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, which grappled with stubborn inflation during **2023-2024**.

### What Is Food Inflation and Why It Matters:

**Food inflation** tracks the year-on-year increase in prices of essential food items and forms a significant component of the **Consumer Price Index (CPI)**. In India, CPI is calculated by the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)** and directly impacts:

- **Household budgets**, especially for low- and middle-income families
- **Monetary policy** decisions by the RBI
- **Consumer confidence and economic stability**

It covers staples such as cereals, pulses, vegetables, fruits, milk, eggs, meat, and edible oils.

### Abundant Monsoon Spurs Record Harvests:

The turnaround in food inflation is largely due to the **exceptionally strong 2024 monsoon**, which delivered **7.6% above-normal rainfall**. This surplus boosted **kharif and rabi crop yields**, improving supply and easing pressure on food prices by early 2025.

The **2025 monsoon** has continued the trend, arriving **early over Kerala on May 24** and delivering **7.1% above the long-period average (LPA)** by **July 20**. Except for a few regions—including **Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, eastern Uttar Pradesh, Marathwada, Assam, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh**—most parts of India have received **above-normal rainfall**.

### Cereal Stocks Surge: Wheat and Rice Supply Stabilized

One of the strongest indicators of food inflation control has been the **rebound in wheat stocks**:

- **Wheat inventories** in government godowns rose to **358.78 lakh tonnes (lt)** as of July 1, 2025—a **four-year high**, up from **282.61 lt** a year earlier.
- **Procurement** increased to **300.35 lt** in April–June 2025, compared to **266.05 lt** in 2024 and **187.92 lt** in 2022.
- **Rice stocks** are also at record highs, ensuring sufficient supply for the **Public Distribution System (PDS)**.

This robust stockpile allows the government to **intervene in markets if prices rise**, something that wasn't possible during the previous inflationary spikes.

**Shift in Cropping Patterns: A Strategic Realignment:** While crops like **pigeon pea (arhar), soyabean, and cotton** saw reduced sowing due to **price volatility and pest threats**, farmers have increasingly shifted to **maize**, which has become more lucrative thanks to demand from:

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

60





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- Ethanol blending programmes
- Animal feed
- Starch and food processing industries

Despite the dip in some oilseeds and pulses, India is mitigating shortages with **record imports**.

## Imports and Duty Cuts Keep Prices in Check:

To stabilise the domestic market, the government has:

- Imported 72.56 lt of pulses and 164.13 lt of vegetable oils in 2024–25
- Extended zero-duty imports on key pulses till March 2026
- Reduced import duties on major edible oils

These steps ensure **ample domestic availability**, helping control prices even amid minor supply disruptions.

## Fertiliser Shortages Pose a Lingering Risk:

Despite a promising start to the cropping season, a **fertiliser shortfall** has emerged as a concern. The strong monsoon has driven up demand, but **stock levels have dropped**:

- Urea stocks fell from 103 lt to 61.22 lt
- DAP (Di-ammonium phosphate) reduced from 19.18 lt to 12.98 lt

This decline is primarily due to **reduced imports from China**, which imposed **export restrictions**. For instance:

- China's urea exports to India fell from 21.48 lt to just 1.04 lt
- DAP exports dropped from 22.87 lt to 8.43 lt

These constraints have driven **DAP prices up sharply**, from \$525 to \$810 per tonne, raising concerns over **input costs and potential yield losses** if the shortfall persists.

## Did You Know?

India is the **second-largest producer of rice and wheat globally**, but it is also the **largest importer of edible oils**. Hence, global commodity prices and trade flows play a critical role in **domestic food inflation trends**.

## Conclusion: Outlook Remains Positive but Watchful

India's food inflation outlook remains **optimistic**, supported by:

- Record harvests
- High buffer stocks
- Strategic imports
- Duty reductions

However, **fertiliser shortages** and **future monsoon patterns** remain **uncertain variables**. Vigilant policy support, timely imports, and responsive market interventions will be essential to **keep food inflation in check** and ensure **price stability** through the rest of 2025 and beyond.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

61



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper I – Geography

## Slovenia: A Picturesque Alpine Nation Embracing Progressive Values

**Context:** In a significant and sensitive policy shift, **Slovenia has become one of the latest countries to legalise assisted dying**, granting terminally ill adults the **right to end their lives** if they are suffering from **unbearable pain**. This progressive legislation reflects Slovenia's alignment with a growing number of nations embracing **individual dignity and choice in end-of-life care**.



### Where Is Slovenia? A Crossroads of Europe

**Slovenia** is a small yet stunning country located at the intersection of **Central and Southeastern Europe**. It shares borders with:

- **Austria** to the north
- **Hungary** to the northeast
- **Italy** to the west
- **Croatia** to the southeast

In addition to its land borders, Slovenia also enjoys a **short but scenic coastline along the Adriatic Sea**, offering both Alpine charm and coastal allure.

### Geography and Natural Beauty:

More than **40% of Slovenia's landscape is mountainous**, making it a haven for hikers, nature lovers, and winter sports enthusiasts. The country is shaped by four major European geographic zones:

- The majestic **European Alps**, including the **Julian Alps**
- The **karstic Dinaric Alps**, known for their caves and limestone formations
- The fertile **Pannonian and Danubian plains** and rolling hills
- A narrow but stunning **Mediterranean coastline**

Its highest peak, **Mount Triglav** (2,864 metres), is not only a natural landmark but also a national symbol proudly featured on the country's flag and coat of arms.

### Climate: Diversity Across a Small Nation

Slovenia's climate is surprisingly varied for its size:

- **Mediterranean climate** along the coast with mild winters and hot summers
- **Continental climate** inland, with warm summers and cold, snowy winters in the valleys and plateaus

This climatic diversity supports a rich biodiversity and varied agricultural output.

### Natural Resources and Rivers:

Slovenia is endowed with several **natural resources**, including:

- **Lignite** (a type of coal)
- **Lead and zinc**
- **Forests and building stone**

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

62



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- Significant **hydropower potential** from its many rivers

Major rivers include the **Sava** and the **Drava**, both of which play crucial roles in hydroelectric generation and irrigation.

## Economy: A Modern, High-Income Market

Despite its small size, **Slovenia boasts a well-developed market economy**. It is one of the most prosperous nations in Eastern Europe, with strengths in:

- **Services and international trade**
- **Automotive parts manufacturing**
- **Pharmaceutical production**
- **Electrical appliances and precision engineering**

The country is a member of the **European Union**, the **Schengen Area**, and the **Eurozone**, which has helped boost trade and investment.

## Ljubljana: Slovenia's Cultural and Political Heart

The capital city, **Ljubljana**, is a charming blend of **Baroque architecture**, **modern urban design**, and **green public spaces**. It's known for:

- A vibrant **cultural scene**
- Historic **castle and riverfront cafés**
- Strong focus on **sustainability and environmental planning**—Ljubljana was named the **European Green Capital** in 2016

## Did You Know?

Slovenia is home to **over 10,000 caves**, with **Postojna Cave** and **Škocjan Caves** being world-famous attractions. The **Škocjan Caves** are a **UNESCO World Heritage Site** and among the largest known underground canyons in the world.

## Conclusion: A Nation of Natural Wonder and Progressive Spirit

From its **Alpine peaks** to its **Adriatic shores**, **Slovenia** is a country that blends **natural splendour** with a **forward-thinking society**. Whether it's promoting **sustainable urban living**, fostering a **strong industrial base**, or taking bold steps in **social legislation**, Slovenia continues to make a mark on Europe—not just as a travel destination, but as a **modern, compassionate, and innovative nation**.





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 3 – Economy

## India Sets Ambitious Goal: Tourism to Contribute 10% to GDP by 2047

**Context:** The Government of India has unveiled an ambitious roadmap to elevate the contribution of the **tourism sector to 10% of the national GDP** by the year **2047**, aligning with the centenary of India's independence. This marks a major push to position **India as a leading global tourism hub**, leveraging its vast cultural, spiritual, ecological, and medical potential.



### The Current Landscape: A Rising Economic Pillar

- **Current Contribution:** Tourism currently contributes around **5–6%** to India's **\$4 trillion economy**.
- **Future Target:** By 2047, India's economy is projected to reach **\$32 trillion**, with tourism expected to make up **\$3.2 trillion** of that figure.
- **Global Position:** India ranked **14th** in global tourism receipts in 2023, capturing **1.8%** of global tourism revenue.
- **Growth Forecast:** The Indian tourism sector is anticipated to grow at a **Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 24%**, making it one of the fastest-growing sectors in the country.

### India's Tourism Treasures: A Land of Endless Experiences

India offers an unparalleled variety of experiences that cater to every kind of traveler. From the majestic **Himalayas** to the serene **coastal retreats**, India's diversity fuels its tourism growth.

1. **Spiritual Tourism:** India is a **spiritual heartland**, home to major world religions and sacred sites. Pilgrimage destinations like **Varanasi, Rameshwaram, Bodh Gaya, and Golden Temple** draw millions each year.
2. **Adventure Tourism:** For thrill-seekers, destinations like **Ladakh, Spiti, Sikkim, and Meghalaya** offer trekking, paragliding, white-water rafting, and more.
3. **Beach Tourism:** The golden shores of **Goa**, tranquil backwaters of **Kerala**, and pristine islands of **Andaman & Nicobar** and **Lakshadweep** are a magnet for beach lovers.
4. **Cultural & Heritage Tourism:** India is home to **40 UNESCO World Heritage Sites**, including **Taj Mahal, Hampi, Khajuraho, and Qutub Minar**. Fairs and festivals like **Pushkar Fair, Taj Mahotsav, and Surajkund Mela** showcase India's vibrant traditions.
5. **Wildlife Tourism:** India boasts over **100 national parks and 500+ wildlife sanctuaries**, home to endangered species like the **Royal Bengal Tiger, Asiatic Lion, and one-horned rhinoceros**.
6. **Medical and Wellness Tourism:** With world-class healthcare at competitive costs, India attracts patients globally through the **"Heal in India" initiative**. Traditional wellness systems like **Ayurveda, Yoga, and Siddha** also boost **wellness tourism**.

### Key Government Initiatives to Drive Growth:

The Government is implementing multi-pronged strategies to **revamp infrastructure, enhance services, and position India competitively** on the global tourism map.

1. **Top 50 Destination Challenge:** Under the **2025 Union Budget**, a new initiative will develop **50 world-class destinations** in collaboration with states through a **"challenge mode"** to improve infrastructure, connectivity, and visitor experience.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

64





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



2. **Swadesh Darshan 2.0:** A revamped scheme promoting **theme-based circuits** such as **Buddhist, Spiritual, Heritage, and Eco circuits**, with focus on quality infrastructure and immersive experiences.
3. **PRASHAD Scheme:** Focused on spiritual tourism, this scheme is **revitalizing pilgrimage centers** like **Ayodhya, Kashi Vishwanath, and Amritsar** with upgraded amenities and transport.
4. **Medical Value Travel:** India is being positioned as a **global medical hub**, with specialized visa processes, healthcare facilitation centers, and partnerships with hospitals.
5. **Atithi Devo Bhava:** This initiative promotes the **Indian tradition of hospitality**, with training programs to enhance **service quality** in tourism and hospitality sectors.
6. **Visa Reforms:** The **e-Visa facility** for citizens of over **160 countries** and **visa fee waivers** for select groups simplify international travel and encourage global tourist footfall.
7. **Sustainable Tourism Initiatives:** Promotion of **eco-friendly, community-based, and responsible tourism** models to ensure growth without compromising on environmental and cultural heritage.

## Challenges on the Path Ahead:

Despite the potential, India's tourism industry must overcome key barriers:

- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Many remote or high-potential sites lack roads, transport, and basic facilities.
- **Environmental Concerns:** Over-tourism has caused degradation in fragile ecosystems like **Himalayas** and **Western Ghats**.
- **Quality Control:** Service inconsistency across hotels, guides, and transport providers hampers tourist satisfaction.
- **Seasonal Fluctuations:** Destinations like **Manali** and **Goa** witness boom-and-bust cycles, affecting local livelihoods.
- **Promotion Deficit:** Lesser-known but beautiful regions like **Northeast India, Chhattisgarh, and Odisha** need better branding and marketing.

## Budget 2025–26: Employment-Led Tourism Growth

To ensure inclusive and employment-driven growth, the government has introduced:

- **MUDRA Loans for Homestays:** Empowering locals to host tourists and create micro-entrepreneurs.
- **Incentives to States:** Performance-based rewards for excellence in destination management, cleanliness, and tourist amenities.
- **Streamlined Visa Processing:** Enhancing ease of access and attractiveness to international tourists.

## The Road to 2047: India's Global Tourism Footprint

India's tourism vision is aligned with **Vision@2047**, aiming to transform the nation into a **top-5 global tourism economy**. By tapping into its **rich heritage, diverse landscapes, and hospitality culture**, India seeks not only economic growth but also a **cultural renaissance**.

**"India is not just a destination—it's an emotion.** From the snow-clad peaks of Kashmir to the tropical charm of Kerala, every corner tells a story waiting to be discovered."

## Additional Insights:

- **Digital Push:** Integration of **AI and digital platforms** like **incredibleindia.org** and virtual reality experiences for global outreach.

Download Our Application



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

65



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **Community Tourism Models:** Promotion of **eco-villages** and **tribal tourism** to bring income directly to indigenous communities.
- **Women in Tourism:** New initiatives aim to train and employ more **women guides, entrepreneurs,** and **hospitality workers**, fostering gender equality.

**Conclusion:** With visionary policy, enhanced infrastructure, global outreach, and community involvement, **India is poised to become a world-class tourist destination.** The government's commitment to "**Seva**" (service) and "**Atithi Devo Bhava**" (the guest is god) lies at the heart of this transformation. As India marches toward **2047**, its tourism sector is not just growing—it is redefining the way the world sees and experiences India.



Download Our Application



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**66**



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

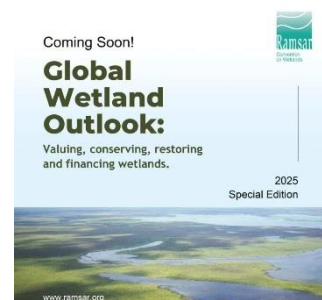
By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 3 – Biodiversity and Conservation

## Global Wetland Outlook 2025: A Call to Protect Earth's Most Vital Ecosystems

**Context:** The **Global Wetland Outlook 2025**, released by the **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**, presents the most comprehensive and up-to-date evaluation of the **state, trends, value, and policy responses** concerning wetlands across the world. Prepared by the **Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP)** of the Convention, this report is a wake-up call to governments, industries, and civil society to act **urgently and decisively** to preserve and restore wetlands — the planet's most valuable yet threatened ecosystems.



### Wetlands: Earth's Lifelines at Risk

The Outlook assesses **eleven broad types of wetlands**, including:

- Seagrass
- Kelp Forests
- Coral Reefs
- Estuarine Waters
- Salt Marshes
- Mangroves
- Tidal Flats
- Lakes
- Rivers and Streams
- Inland Marshes and Swamps
- Peatlands (Mires)

These ecosystems, essential for life on Earth, are rapidly disappearing.

### Major Alarming Findings:

#### A Shrinking Natural Asset:

- Since **1970**, the world has lost around **411 million hectares** of wetlands — a **22% decline** in global wetland extent.
- The **annual loss rate** stands at **-0.52%**, with some wetland types declining as fast as **-1.8% per year**.

#### Global Degradation Patterns:

- The most significant losses were reported in **Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean**.
- Even developed regions like **Europe, North America, and Oceania** showed alarming levels of **wetland degradation**.

#### Main Drivers of Destruction:

- **Urban expansion, industrial development, and infrastructure projects** remain the key drivers in many developing nations.
- **Invasive species** plague wetlands in North America and Oceania.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

67



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **Prolonged droughts** are emerging as a major threat across **Europe**.

## Economic and Ecological Importance:

### Wetlands: A Trillion-Dollar Ecosystem

- The remaining **1,425 million hectares** of wetlands generate between **\$7.98 trillion to \$39.01 trillion** annually in **ecosystem services**.
- If conserved and managed properly, wetlands can contribute over **\$205.25 trillion** in **net present value (NPV)** by 2050.

### Restoration vs Conservation:

- The cost of **wetland restoration** can range from **\$1,000 to \$70,000 per hectare per year**.
- **Conservation** of healthy wetlands is **far more cost-effective** and efficient than post-degradation restoration.

### Financial Shortfalls and Global Inaction:

Despite their immense value, wetlands remain **underfunded** and neglected in global environmental finance:

- Current **biodiversity conservation investment** is only **0.25% of global GDP**.
- This highlights a **massive financing gap** that must be addressed through both **public and private sector participation**.

### Urgent Recommendations:

To reverse wetland decline, the report urges:

- **Integration of wetlands into global financing mechanisms**, such as the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF)**.
- Unlocking a **blend of public and private finance** to treat wetlands as **nature-based solutions** to climate change, water management, and biodiversity loss.
- Enhancing **political will**, **public awareness**, and **institutional capacity** at all levels.

### The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF):

Adopted at **COP15 to the Convention on Biological Diversity** in 2022, the **GBF** is dubbed the "**Paris Agreement for Nature**."

### Key Highlights of the GBF:

- Contains **4 overarching global goals** and **23 specific targets** to be achieved by 2030.
- **Target 3 or "30x30 Goal"**:
  - Protect **30% of global land and marine areas** by 2030.
  - Restore **30% of degraded ecosystems**.
  - Achieve **near-zero biodiversity loss** in intact ecosystems by the end of the decade.

### Understanding Wetlands: The Unsung Ecosystems

**Wetlands** are areas where water dominates the land — either permanently or seasonally — and form **unique ecosystems**.

They include:

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**68**





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **Natural wetlands:** Rivers, lakes, mangroves, coral reefs, peatlands, deltas, and swamps.
- **Human-made wetlands:** Fish ponds, rice paddies, reservoirs, and artificial lakes.

Wetlands are usually classified into **inland**, **coastal**, and **man-made** wetlands

## Wetlands in India: A Rich Yet Vulnerable Treasure

India is home to a wide variety of wetland types:

- **Himalayan high-altitude wetlands**
- **Floodplains** of the **Ganga** and **Brahmaputra**
- **Mangrove forests** along the **Sundarbans**
- **Coral reefs** in **Lakshadweep** and **Andaman & Nicobar Islands**

### Current Status:

- Wetlands cover **4.6% of India's land area**.
- India has **91 Ramsar Sites**, the **highest in South Asia** and **third-highest in Asia**.

### Ecological Importance of Wetlands:

- **Biodiversity Reservoirs:** Home to countless endangered and endemic species.
- **Water Purifiers:** Naturally remove pollutants, sediments, and heavy metals.
- **Flood Regulators:** Absorb excess rainfall and mitigate natural disasters.
- **Carbon Sinks:** Peatlands and marshes store vast amounts of **carbon**, helping to combat **climate change**.
- **Livelihood Supporters:** Wetlands sustain agriculture, aquaculture, and tourism industries.

### Ramsar Convention: Global Guardian of Wetlands

- **Established in 1971** in **Ramsar, Iran** and came into force in **1975**.
- Focuses on the **wise use and conservation** of wetlands.
- Wetlands under the Convention are known as **Ramsar Sites**.

### Key Criteria for Ramsar Sites:

- Support for **endangered species** and **ecological communities**.
- Provide habitat to **20,000+ waterbirds** regularly.
- Function as important **spawning or breeding grounds** for fish and other aquatic life.

### Conclusion: A Race Against Time

The **Global Wetland Outlook 2025** paints a stark picture: **wetlands are disappearing faster than forests**, and with them, **life-sustaining services are vanishing**. Yet, with the right policies, financing, and collective will, it is **not too late**.



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 3 – Environment & Biodiversity

## Kerala Emerges as India's Biodiversity Discovery Champion

**Context:** In a record-breaking year for **India's biodiversity documentation**, Kerala has taken the lead as the **top contributor of new faunal discoveries** in the country. According to the recently released '**Animal Discoveries: New Species and New Records 2024**' report by the **Zoological Survey of India (ZSI)**, a staggering **683 new species and subspecies** were documented in India in 2024 — the **highest-ever tally** since formal records began in **2008**.



Of these, **459 species are entirely new to science**, while **224 species** were recorded for the **first time in India**.

### Kerala Leads the Nation:

Kerala alone accounted for **101 faunal discoveries**, of which **80 are new species** and **21 are new records** for India. This exceptional achievement places Kerala ahead of other biodiversity-rich states:

- **Karnataka:** 82 species
- **Arunachal Pradesh:** 72 species
- **Tamil Nadu:** 63 species
- **West Bengal:** 56 species
- **Meghalaya:** 42 species
- **Andaman and Nicobar Islands:** 43 new faunal entries, including 14 new species and 29 new records

Noteworthy Discoveries: From the Forest Floor to the Canopy

Among the most remarkable finds is a **new snake species from Himachal Pradesh**, named *Anguiculus dicaprio* in honor of actor and environmentalist **Leonardo DiCaprio**, recognizing his work in **climate action and biodiversity conservation**.

### Additional highlights include:

- **Two new genera and 37 new reptilian species**
- **Five amphibians**, including one from a **new genus**
- Contributions to herpetology, entomology, and marine fauna

### Botanical Breakthroughs: Flora Flourishes Too

The **Botanical Survey of India (BSI)** also released its report documenting **433 new plant taxa** in 2024. Once again, **Kerala led the count**, with **58 new plant discoveries**, which included:

- **154 angiosperms**
- **63 lichens**
- **156 fungi**
- **32 algae**
- **9 microbial species**

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

70



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



With these additions, **India's documented plant diversity** has now reached an impressive **56,177 species**, reaffirming the country's position as one of the **most biodiverse nations on the planet**.

## Why Kerala Stands Out as a Biodiversity Powerhouse:

Kerala's dominance in biodiversity discoveries can be attributed to a combination of **ecological richness** and **scientific rigor**:

- Home to the **Western Ghats**, one of the world's most significant **biodiversity hotspots**
- A diverse range of ecosystems: **coastal wetlands, tropical rainforests, montane forests, and freshwater lakes**
- Proactive **field surveys** and the use of **modern techniques** like **DNA barcoding**
- Strong collaboration between **ZSI scientists, local experts, and academic institutions**

## India's Biodiversity Hotspots: Where Life Thrives

India is one of the **17 megadiverse countries** globally and hosts **four globally recognized biodiversity hotspots**. These regions are identified by **Conservation International** and were conceptualized by ecologist **Norman Myers**.

## The Four Hotspots in India:

1. **Western Ghats** (*Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat*) – Notable species: **Lion-tailed macaque, Nilgiri tahr, Malabar civet**
2. **Himalayas** (*J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam*) – Unique fauna: **Snow leopard, Red panda, Himalayan monal**
3. **Indo-Burma** (*Northeast India and Andaman Islands*) – Home to: **Clouded leopard, Golden langur, Hoolock gibbon**
4. **Sundaland** (*Nicobar Islands*) – Rich in: **Nicobar megapode, saltwater crocodile, marine coral ecosystems**

These hotspots are ecologically fragile but **teeming with endemic life forms**, making them **critical areas for conservation**.

## Why These Regions Matter

- **High Endemism**: Species found nowhere else on Earth
- **Vital Ecosystem Services**: Water regulation, soil protection, carbon storage
- **Cultural Relevance**: Integral to indigenous communities' traditions and livelihoods
- **Global Priority**: Though they cover only **2.3% of Earth's surface**, they host **over 50% of endemic plant species**

## Growing Threats to Biodiversity:

Despite their importance, India's rich ecosystems face mounting threats:

- **Deforestation and habitat loss**
- **Climate change and glacial retreat**
- **Illegal wildlife trade and poaching**
- **Infrastructure expansion, mining, and urban sprawl**

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

71



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **Invasive species and agricultural encroachment**

These pressures highlight the urgent need for **sustainable and community-led conservation** efforts.

Conservation Initiatives: Protecting India's Natural Wealth

India has been proactive in preserving its biodiversity through:

- **Protected Areas:** 106 national parks, 566 wildlife sanctuaries, and 18 biosphere reserves
- **Legislation:** *Wildlife Protection Act, 1972* – *Biological Diversity Act, 2002*
- **People-Centric Approaches:** Sacred groves, eco-development, and Joint Forest Management (JFM)
- **International Commitments:** Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) – Sustainable Development Goal 15: "Life on Land"

### Conclusion: A Moment of Celebration and Caution

Kerala's ascent as **India's top biodiversity discovery hotspot** is not just a scientific milestone — it is a reminder of the **natural heritage we must protect**. As India continues to uncover new species at a record pace, the emphasis must shift from **discovery to conservation**.



[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

72





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper 1 – Geography

## Bitra Island: Lakshadweep's Smallest Inhabited Isle May Soon Host Defence Base

**Context:** Bitra Island, the **smallest inhabited island** in the **Lakshadweep archipelago**, has come under the spotlight as the **Union Territory administration** is reportedly considering its **acquisition for defence purposes**. If finalized, Bitra would become the **third island in Lakshadweep** to host a **defence establishment**, joining **INS Dweep prakshak** in **Kavaratti** and **INS Jatayu** in **Minicoy**.



### Where is Bitra Island?

Located in the **northernmost region of Lakshadweep**, Bitra Island is a **tiny coral atoll** that holds both **strategic and cultural significance**. Despite its small size, it is **inhabited** and serves as a **key location in India's western maritime frontier**.

### A Place of Pilgrimage:

Bitra is also known for a **small but sacred shrine** dedicated to **Malik Mulla**, an **Arab saint** believed to be **buried on the island**. This makes Bitra a **spiritual destination**, attracting occasional pilgrims from across Lakshadweep.

### Climatic Conditions:

The **climate of Bitra** closely mirrors that of **coastal Kerala**. The **hottest months** stretch from **March to May**, with **temperatures ranging between 25°C and 35°C**, and **humidity levels** typically hovering between **70% and 76%** throughout the year. This **tropical marine climate** is influenced by the **Southwest Monsoon**, like the rest of Lakshadweep.

### A Lost Haven for Seabirds:

In the past, **Bitra Island served as a significant breeding ground** for various **seabird species**, highlighting its **ecological importance**. Though human settlement and changing climatic patterns have altered its biodiversity, the island still remains **biologically sensitive** and forms part of the **Lakshadweep Archipelago's fragile coral ecosystem**.

### Strategic and Defence Relevance:

With India strengthening its **maritime security posture** in the **Indian Ocean Region (IOR)**, Bitra's potential role as a **defence outpost** gains importance. Positioned closer to key international shipping lanes and far from the mainland, **Bitra offers a strategic vantage point** for **monitoring naval activity** and **enhancing coastal security**.

### Once operationalized, a base here would:

- Expand the **Indian Navy's surveillance reach**
- Strengthen India's **blue water capabilities**
- Support **search and rescue operations** and **disaster relief efforts**
- Enhance **logistical support** for vessels operating in the Arabian Sea

### A Glimpse Into Bitra's Life:

- **Population:** The island has a **very small population**, primarily composed of **fisherfolk** and **government employees**.

[Download Our Application](#)



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

73



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



- **Connectivity:** Like other remote islands in Lakshadweep, **access to Bitra is limited**, mostly dependent on **boat services** and **helicopter operations** from larger islands like Agatti.
- **Infrastructure:** Facilities on the island are **minimal**, making it a likely candidate for **strategic infrastructure development** if the defence acquisition proceeds.

## Conclusion: Bitra on the Brink of Transformation

From a **quiet, remote isle** with spiritual and ecological value, **Bitra Island is poised to play a vital role in India's defence architecture** in the Arabian Sea. As India continues to prioritize its **maritime security and island development**, Bitra could soon evolve into a **strategic cornerstone** in the country's oceanic frontier.



Download Our Application



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

**74**



## Indian Astronomical Observatory Captures Rare Interstellar Comet in Ladakh's Skies

**Context:** In a groundbreaking celestial event, **Indian astronomers have successfully captured images of the interstellar comet C/2025 N1 (ATLAS)**—also referred to as **3I/ATLAS**—using the **Himalayan Chandra Telescope (HCT)** located at the **Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO)** in **Hanle, Ladakh**. This marks a **major milestone** for Indian space science, showcasing the country's growing capability in **observational astronomy** and **deep-space tracking**.



### About the Indian Astronomical Observatory (IAO):

Often referred to as the **Hanle Observatory**, the **Indian Astronomical Observatory** is situated in the **remote Hanle Valley of Ladakh**, at an **altitude of 4,500 metres above sea level**, making it **one of the highest observatories in the world**. It was officially inaugurated in **2001** and is operated by the **Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bengaluru**.

### Why Hanle? The Ideal Site for Astronomy

The **location of IAO** is nothing short of extraordinary. Nestled in a **dry, cold desert**, with **minimal human activity**, **low humidity**, and **crystal-clear skies**, Hanle offers one of the best viewing platforms on the planet for astronomical observations. The **atmospheric clarity** at Hanle enables observations in:

- **Optical wavelengths**
- **Infrared**
- **Sub-millimetre and millimetre bands**

This makes it a **world-class site** comparable to global observatories in Chile, Hawaii, and the Canary Islands.

### Key Features of the Observatory:

- **Himalayan Chandra Telescope (HCT):** A **2-meter aperture optical-infrared telescope**, remotely operated from **CREST (Centre for Research and Education in Science and Technology)** in Bengaluru. It plays a key role in imaging supernovae, gamma-ray bursts, variable stars, and now even **interstellar comets**.
- **Solar Power Plant:** Ensures energy efficiency in this remote location.
- **Satellite Communication Systems:** Enables seamless data transfer and real-time remote operation.
- **Liquid Nitrogen Plant:** Used to cool sensitive astronomical detectors and instruments.

### Hanle: India's First Dark Sky Reserve

In a rare honour, **Hanle has been declared as India's first Dark Sky Reserve** by the **International Dark-Sky Association (IDA)**. This designation is given to places that maintain **exceptionally dark night skies**, actively protect them from **light pollution**, and foster **scientific research and eco-tourism**.

### What makes Hanle special:

- Fewer than **1,000 residents**, ensuring minimal artificial lighting
- Pristine, **unpolluted skies** perfect for stargazing and astrophotography
- Proximity to **Hanle Monastery**, blending ancient culture with cutting-edge science



# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



Hanle is now a major hub for **astro-tourism**, offering breathtaking views of the **Milky Way**, **meteor showers**, and **planetary movements**.

## Interstellar Comet 3I/ATLAS: A Rare Visitor from Deep Space

The comet **C/2025 N1 (ATLAS)**—now officially the **third known interstellar object** to visit our Solar System—was captured in detail by the IAO. These interstellar objects originate from **outside our Solar System**, making their detection both **scientifically invaluable** and **rare**. Previously, only two such visitors had been recorded:

1. **'Oumuamua (1I/'Oumuamua)** in 2017
2. **2I/Borisov** in 2019

The ability of the **IAO in Hanle** to image 3I/ATLAS proves its **high-precision tracking capabilities**, even of **high-velocity, transient deep-space objects**.

## Conclusion: Hanle Shines Bright in the World of Astronomy

The successful observation of 3I/ATLAS from **India's high-altitude observatory** is a **landmark achievement**, reinforcing the status of the Indian Astronomical Observatory as a **global centre for advanced astronomical research**.

freedom UPSC  
TOGETHER WE SCALE HEIGHTS

[Download Our Application](#)



GET IT ON  
Google Play

**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

76





# CURRENT AFFAIRS QUIZ

By Dhananjay Gautam



GS Paper I – Geography

## Sudan: Conflict Rekindles in the Heart of Northeast Africa

**Context:** Sudan, a country at the **crossroads of Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East**, is once again in the global spotlight following **deadly clashes between rival military factions** in its **Kordofan region**. The **ongoing internal strife**, rooted in political instability and power struggles, continues to claim civilian lives and destabilize the region.

### Capital and Strategic Location:

- **Capital: Khartoum** — situated at the iconic **confluence of the White Nile and Blue Nile**, forming the world-renowned **Nile River**.
- **Geopolitical Position:** Sudan holds a **strategic location**, **bordering the Red Sea** to the east, making it a **critical maritime gateway** between **Africa and the Arabian Peninsula**.



### Political Borders:

Sudan is surrounded by **seven countries**, which reflect its **strategic and sensitive location**:

- **North – Egypt**
- **East – Eritrea and Ethiopia**
- **South – South Sudan**
- **West – Central African Republic and Chad**
- **Northwest – Libya**

Its **eastern maritime boundary** along the **Red Sea** also enhances its geopolitical importance in **global trade** and **regional security**.

### Physical Geography: Mountains and Mighty Rivers

- **Highest Peak: Jebel Marra** (also called the **Marrah Mountains**) – a volcanic mountain range in western Sudan, known for its **fertile highlands** and **unique biodiversity**.
- **Rivers: The White Nile and Blue Nile**, two of the **most important tributaries** of the Nile River, **merge in Khartoum**. This confluence forms the **lifeline of Northeast Africa**, supporting agriculture, transportation, and cultural development across multiple nations.

### Extra Insight: Sudan's Role in the Nile Basin

Sudan is one of the **key riparian states** in the **Nile Basin**, making it central to water-sharing agreements and regional diplomacy involving **Egypt, Ethiopia, and South Sudan**. The **Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD)** has been a major point of contention involving Sudan, highlighting its **diplomatic balancing act** between national interests and regional cooperation.

### Conclusion: A Nation of Geopolitical and Environmental Significance

Despite the **political turmoil** and **civil unrest**, Sudan remains a country of **immense historical, geographic, and strategic importance**. With its **location bridging Africa and the Middle East**, access to the **Red Sea**, and its place in the **Nile River system**, Sudan's future will significantly influence regional stability and development in the Horn of Africa.

Download Our Application



**Freedom UPSC with Dhananjay Gautam**

Page No

77