



**AXIA**  
**IAS ACADEMY**  
RISE ABOVE THE REST

# AXIA IAS ACADEMY



DAILY NEWS ANALYSIS



MARCH 17



CONSISTENT COMPREHENSIVE  
AND CREDIBLE



UNIQUE AND BEST IN  
QUALITY



# AXIA

## IAS ACADEMY

RISE ABOVE THE REST



**UPSC CSE CLASSES - PRELIMS + MAINS + INTERVIEW GUIDANCE**

- **EXPERT FACULTY & MENTORSHIP**
- **COMPREHENSIVE STUDY MATERIAL**
- **REGULAR TEST SERIES & EVALUATION**
- **CURRENT AFFAIRS & ANSWER WRITING FOCUS**
- **SMALL BATCH SIZES FOR PERSONAL ATTENTION**

**[axiaiasacademy.com](http://axiaiasacademy.com)**

**+91 6002-417488**

# India to sign U.S. deal only after clarity on rates

Any deal must be weighed against tariff structure and comparative advantage, says senior official

U.S. court ruling against tariffs hadn't come when govt. said deal will be signed in March, adds official

However, Commerce Secretary maintains India is engaged with U.S. for a mutually beneficial deal

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan  
NEW DELHI

India will sign a trade deal with the U.S. only after the country settles its "tariff architecture" and clarifies country-wise tariff rate, sources in the government have said.

"Any deal that we finalise and sign has to be seen against the tariff structure or comparative advantage that India gets in the U.S. market," a senior official in the Ministry of Commerce said. "The U.S. is working on trying to recreate a tariff architecture globally. If they are able to finalise that, at that juncture it would be right to sign the deal," the official said.

This comes against the backdrop of two trade-related investigations the U.S. is carrying out that could potentially see additional tariffs being levied on a number of countries,

## Tariff travails

In 2025, U.S. imposed 25% reciprocal tariffs on India. An additional 25% linked to import of Russian oil was later imposed taking total tariffs to 50%. A timeline of events thereafter:

Feb. 6, 2026: India and the U.S. issue a statement on framework on interim pact

Additional 25% Russian oil-linked tariff removed (Tariff on India: 25%)

Feb. 20: U.S. SC strikes down reciprocal tariffs

Feb. 24: U.S. imposes

10% tariff on all countries for 150 days. Tariff on India: 10%

Mar. 11-12: USTR launches probe which could lead to additional tariffs

Mar. 16: Govt. sources say deal will only be signed after U.S. finalises tariffs on India and other countries

including India.

Meanwhile, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said that India remains engaged with the U.S. on a trade deal.

"Pursuant to the U.S. Supreme Court judgment dated February 20, 2026 invalidating reciprocal tariffs, the reciprocal tariffs are no longer in force," Mr. Agrawal told presspersons

on Monday. "The U.S. government has issued Executive Orders imposing 10% tariffs pursuant to Section 122 of the Trade Act, 1974 on certain products from all countries," he added. "India remains engaged with the U.S. side for a mutually beneficial trade agreement," he said.

India and the U.S. announced a trade deal on

## India's trade deficit stands at \$4 billion in Feb.

NEW DELHI

India's trade balance stood at a deficit of about \$4 billion in February compared with a surplus of \$2.7 billion a year earlier due in large part to merchandise exports staying flat while imports of both merchandise and services grew significantly

during the month. » PAGE 12

February 2 and a joint statement on the finalisation of a framework for the deal was released on February 7. At the time, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal had said that the deal would be signed in March.

The U.S. Supreme Court on February 20 ruled against the validity of U.S. President Donald Trump's

use of the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to levy reciprocal tariffs on America's trade partners. It is after this that the U.S. imposed the 10% tariffs on all its trade partners under Section 122 of the Trade Act, 1974. These tariffs are in force for a period of 150 days from February 24.

"The U.S. deal was to be signed in March. When we said this, at that time the Supreme Court judgement on IEEPA tariffs had not come," the official explained. "Now with the Supreme Court judgement on IEEPA tariffs, the tariffs per se don't exist."

Additionally, over the course of March 11-12, the U.S. Trade Representative initiated two separate investigations into the U.S.' trade partners under Section 301 of the Trade Act, 1974. If the findings of these investigations war-

rant it, the U.S. can impose additional tariffs on particular countries.

Under the framework announced by the two countries, the U.S. was to impose an 18% tariff on most goods imported from India. Now, the new rate will depend on the rates the U.S. imposes on India's competitors.

"Depending on how their tariff architecture settles, that will determine where India will land," the official said. "In case all others are at 19%, 20%, 21%, 22%, then India will remain at 18%. But if others come down, then India will also come down. That is something for the U.S. also to take a call on."

### On Russian oil

Mr. Agrawal also highlighted that the U.S.' removal of tariffs on India is linked to its import of Russian oil.

"On February 7, 2026,

the 25% additional ad-valorem tariffs imposed by the U.S. on certain Indian exports citing India's imports of Russian oil were removed," Mr. Agrawal noted.

Following the start of the ongoing conflict in West Asia, the U.S. Treasury Department issued an order to "allow" India to import oil from Russia, a concession it later expanded to all countries.

"On petroleum, whether we are buying it at a premium [from Russia], the Petroleum Ministry would be the right forum to answer it in detail," Mr. Agrawal said.

He said, "But we do monitor the import data and we can say that we are buying Russian oil and there has been an increased buying of Russian oil in the current month because of the challenges we are facing."

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Tariff Architecture:** The overall structure and hierarchy of import duties a country sets. It includes the base rates, preferential rates, and any additional levies.
- **Comparative Advantage:** An economic principle where a country produces a specific good at a lower opportunity cost than its trading partners. India's goal is to ensure that its "advantage" isn't erased by high U.S. tariffs.
- **Reciprocal Tariffs:** A "tit-for-tat" trade policy where Country A imposes the same tariff on Country B that Country B imposes on Country A.
- **Section 122 (Trade Act, 1974):** A U.S. legal provision allowing the President to impose temporary import surcharges (up to 150 days) to deal with serious balance-of-payment deficits.
- **Section 301 (Trade Act, 1974):** A tool used by the U.S. to investigate and respond to "unfair" foreign trade practices that burden U.S. commerce. It often leads to unilateral sanctions or tariffs.
- **IEEPA (International Emergency Economic Powers Act):** A U.S. federal law authorizing the President to regulate commerce after declaring a national emergency in response to an unusual and extraordinary threat.
- **Ad-valorem Tariff:** A charge levied as a fixed percentage of the value of the imported good (e.g., a 10% tax on a \$100 smartphone).

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis is that **India is prioritizing "strategic patience" over a hasty trade deal.**
- **Wait-and-Watch on Tariffs:** India refuses to sign a deal while the U.S. tariff landscape is in flux. If India agrees to an 18% rate while its competitors later get 15% through different U.S. domestic rulings, India loses its market edge.
- **Legal Volatility in the U.S.:** The U.S. judiciary's invalidation of certain executive tariffs (IEEPA) has forced the U.S. administration to pivot to other legal routes (Section 122 and 301). This creates a "moving target" for Indian negotiators.
- **The Energy Nexus:** There is a clear link between trade concessions and geopolitical stances. The U.S. removing certain tariffs on India was a calculated move related to India's continued purchase of Russian oil amidst global sanctions.
- **Relative Competitiveness:** India's primary concern isn't just the absolute tariff rate it faces, but the *relative* rate compared to other nations.

---

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-1991:** India followed an inward-looking, Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) model with very high tariffs, leading to minimal trade friction with the U.S. because there was little trade.
- **Post-1991 (Liberalization):** Trade grew, but disputes arose over Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and agricultural subsidies.
- **The GSP Era:** For decades, India benefited from the **Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)**, which allowed duty-free entry for many products.
- **2019 Pivot:** The U.S. terminated India's GSP status, citing a lack of reciprocal market access. This began a period of "tariff wars."
- **2024-2026 (The "New Protectionism"):** We are seeing a shift where the U.S. is using domestic laws (Section 122/301) to recreate a global trade order, and India is responding by demanding clarity before committing to long-term frameworks.

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **2023 (GS II):** "The critical and regional geopolitics are increasingly influencing the trade policies of nations. Discuss in the context of India-US relations."
- **2021 (GS III):** "Explain the difference between computing methodology of India's GDP and the US' GDP." (Relates to economic standards).
- **2017 (GS II):** "What introduces friction into the ties between India and the United States is that Washington is still unable to find for India a position in its global strategy. Explain."

# Navigating the "New Protectionism": India-U.S. Trade Dynamics & Strategic Autonomy

A comprehensive analysis for UPSC aspirants on shifting trade architecture, legal volatility, and geopolitical maneuvers, focusing on India's "Strategic Autonomy" amidst a volatile U.S. tariff landscape.

## COMPARISON TABLE: U.S. TRADE INSTRUMENTS

- SECTION 122 (TRAGE ACT, 1974):  
BALANCE-OF-PAYMENTS**  
Allows President to impose temporary (150-day) import surcharges up to 15% to address serious balance-of-payment deficits.
- SECTION 301 INVESTIGATION:  
UNFAIR TRADE PRACTICES**  
Tool to investigate "unfair" foreign trade practices, often leading to unilateral sanctions or country-specific tariffs.
- THE IEEPA INVALIDATION**  
U.S. Supreme Court ruled IEEPA cannot be used for tariffs, creating a "moving target" for Indian negotiators.

## Geoeconomic Nexus



## STRATEGIC LOGIC & THE "WAIT-AND-WATCH" POLICY

- STRATEGIC PATIENCE VS. HASTY BEALS**  
India refuses to lock into an 18% tariff rate if competitors might later receive 15% through different U.S. domestic rulings, erasing market edge.
- THE ENERGY-TRADE NEXUS**  
U.S. removal of a 25% punitive tariff was explicitly linked to India's commitment to curtail Russian oil imports and deepen strategic defense ties.
- RELATIVE GAINS THEORY**  
India evaluates trade deals not just on absolute gains, but on whether it gains more or less than its regional competitors.

## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF INDIA-U.S. TRADE



## COMPARISON TABLE: U.S. TRADE INSTRUMENTS

INSTRUMENT	LEGAL BASIS	DURATION/SCOPE
Section 122	Balance-of-Payments	Temporary (150 days), Global Surcharge
Section 301	Unfair Trade Practices	Long-term, Country-specific
Section 232	National Security	Specific sectors (e.g., Steel, Pharms)
IEEPA	National Emergency	Invalidated for tariffs by U.S. Supreme Court

## UPSC SYLLABUS & NCERT LINKAGES

- GS PAPER II (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS) & GS PAPER III (ECONOMY)**  
Focuses on bilateral agreements, policies of developed countries on India's interests, liberalization, changes in industrial policy, and effects on industrial growth.
- NCERT LINKAGES**  
Class 11 Economics (Liberalization/Globalization) and Class 12 Political Science (U.S. Hegemony).

# ASI allows T.N. Archaeology Dept. to conduct excavations at Keeladi, seven other sites

**N. Sai Charan**

CHENNAI

After a delay of several months, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has granted permission to the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA) for conducting excavations at eight historical sites, including the 11th phase of excavations at Keeladi.

According to officials, the approval has been given for excavations at Keeladi and its clusters in Sivaganga district; Pattinamarudhur in Thoothukudi district; Karivalamvanthanallur in Tenkasi district; Manikollai in Cuddalore district; Adichanur in Villupuram district; Vellalore in Coimbatore district; Telunganur-Mangadu in Salem district; and Nagapattinam.

Following the recommendation of an expert



The approval has been given to conduct excavations at Keeladi and its clusters in Sivaganga district, among other sites. FILE PHOTO

committee, the Exploration and Excavation Section of the ASI granted the permission on March 13 under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Rules, 1959.

In July 2025, the TNSDA sought the ASI's approval for excavations at these sites, which were announced by Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu in the Tamil Nadu Budget for

2025-26. Following delays, Tamil Nadu officials wrote to the ASI, as the excavation season runs from January to July in the State.

## Centre's nod sought

Recently, Chief Minister M.K. Stalin also urged the Centre to grant the approval at the earliest, stating that the monsoon would disrupt fieldwork in the second half of the year.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI):** The premier central organization under the Ministry of Culture for archaeological research and protection of cultural heritage. It acts as the regulating body for all excavations in India.
- **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Rules, 1959:** The legal framework that governs the conservation of monuments and the process of obtaining licenses for archaeological excavations.
- **Keeladi Cluster:** A massive archaeological site on the banks of the Vaigai River. It has provided evidence of an urban civilization existing in South India contemporary to the Iron Age/Post-Mauryan period, pushing back the dates of the Sangam Era.
- **Stratigraphy:** The study of layered soil and rock. In archaeology, this is used to date artifacts based on the depth at which they are found (deeper layers are generally older).
- **Sangam Landscape:** A socio-cultural categorization of land in ancient Tamil literature (Kurinji, Mullai, Marutham, Neithal, and Paalai). Modern excavations aim to find the physical reality of these literary descriptions.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

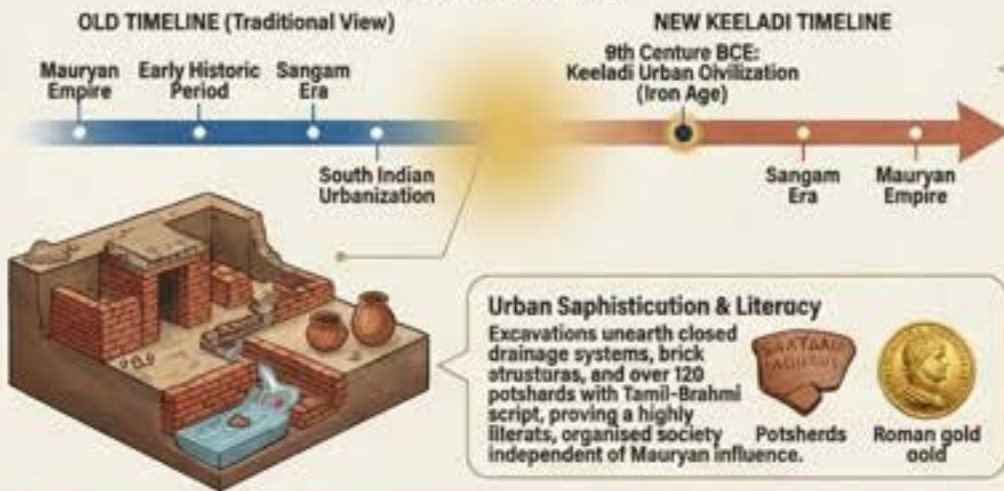
- The core of the current development lies in the **procedural and scientific necessity** of continuous excavation.
- **Continuity of Research:** The 11th phase at Keeladi signifies that previous findings (like the high literacy rate indicated by Tamil-Brahmi sherds) require more lateral excavation to understand the full town planning.
- **Diversification of Sites:** By approving eight different sites (from coastal Nagapattinam to inland Salem), the state aims to create a map of ancient internal and overseas trade routes.
- **The "Chronology" Debate:** The primary thesis is that the "Second Urbanization" was not limited to the Gangetic Plains. Evidence from Keeladi suggests a sophisticated urban life in the South as early as the 6th century BCE.
- **Timing and Seasonality:** Archaeology is a race against the weather. The argument put forth by the State is that delays in central approval risk losing an entire "digging season" (January–July) to the monsoon.



- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **Pre-Independence:** Archaeology was dominated by the "Eurocentric" view that South Indian history began much later than the North.
- **Post-Independence (1950s–80s):** Focus remained largely on Harappan and Vedic sites. Sites like **Adichanallur** were known but not extensively linked to a broader civilizational narrative.
- **The Keeladi Breakthrough (2014–Present):** Initial excavations by the ASI (Phase I & II) sparked national interest. When the ASI shifted focus, the **Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA)** took the lead, marking a shift toward state-funded large-scale excavations.
- **Scientific Turn:** The transition from mere "pottery collection" to **Carbon-14 dating**, DNA analysis of skeletal remains, and soil micromorphology has modernized the debate.
  
- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**
- **UPSC Mains (2023):** "Explain the role of geographical factors in the development of Ancient India." (Keeladi's location on the Vaigai is a perfect example).
- **UPSC Mains (2016):** "The ancient civilization in the Indian sub-continent differed from those of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Greece in that its culture and traditions have been preserved without a breakdown to the present day. Comment."
- **UPSC Prelims (Multiple Years):** Questions on Tamil-Brahmi script, Megalithic burials, and Sangam ports (Arikamedu, Muziris).

## The Keeladi Discovery: Shifting the Civilizational Narrative

### CHRONOLOGY SHIFT



**Pushing Back the Timeline (9<sup>th</sup> Century BCE):** Radiocarbon dating of Keeladi artifacts confirms an advanced urban civilization existed in South India contemporary to the Iron Age/Post-Mauryan period, challenging north-centric historical timelines.

**The "Keeladi Cluster" Concept**  
Rather than an isolated site, archaeology now looks at functional zones.



## Heritage Governance & Federalism

**The AMASR Act & Legal Framework**  
The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act (1986) governs the protection of monuments and the licensing process for excavations.

### COMPARISON: ASI vs. TNSDA: A Federal Balancing Act



**Administrative Friction & 'Red Taping'**  
Delays in central approval can cost an entire "digging season" (January-July), highlighting the need for time-bound clearances to protect time-sensitive scientific work.

## The Science of the Past: Methodological Evolution

### PROCESS STEP: From Pottery to Lab Science

Transitioning from more surface collection to advanced techniques like AMS Carbon Dating, DNA analysis of skeletal remains, and soil micromorphology to build objective truths.



### KEY FINDING

**Maritime & Internal Trade Networks**  
Discoveries of Roman gold coins and Indo-Pacific glass beads at sites like Vellore and Manikollai reveal ancient Tamilakam's role in global trade reaching the Mediterranean and Southeast Asia.



### SUPPORTING FACT: Submerged History: Underwater Archaeology

Proposed deep-sea explorations off Nagapattinam aim to map the Chola maritime empire and the submerged Buddhist Chudamani Vihara.

## UPSC Strategic Linkages (The Aspirant's Guide)

**Note-making Tips**

**GS Paper 1: Culture & History**

Focus on the salient aspects of Art, Literature (Sangam), and the local geographical factors (Volgal River) that shaped ancient South Indian urbanization.

**Note-making Tips**

**GS Paper 2 & 4: Polity & Ethics**

Analyze Centre-State administrative relations in heritage and the ethical responsibility of maintaining objectivity in historical narratives against political pressure.

**QUOTE**

**Epistemology: "How We Know What We Know"**

"Archaeology serves as a 'silent history,' providing an objective truth about the common man that written records might miss or omit."

**Note-making Tips**

**GS Paper 2 & A: Community & History**

Analyze the salient research administrative relation heritage and the ethical responsibility maintaining objectivity in historical narratives against political pressure.

### Data Table: The Multi-Site Research Strategy (Phase II & Beyond)

Site Name	Primary Research Focus
Keeladi Cluster	Chronology of 2nd Urbanization & Sangam habitation
Nagapattinam	Underwater exploration of Buddhist & Chola maritime links
Vellore/Coimbatore	Indo-Roman trade and overland commercial corridors
Manikollai	Indo-Pacific glass bead production & Southeast Asian trade
Karivalamvaathanallur	Early Historic settlement patterns and Roman coin evidence

Purpose: To show the diversity of research goals across newly approved sites.

# Sahitya Akademi announces awards for 2025 in 24 languages

Eight books of poetry, four novels, six books of short stories, two essays, one literary criticism work, an autobiography, and two memoirs win

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Sahitya Akademi on Monday announced its awards for 2025 in the 24 languages recognised by it, nearly three months after the process was abruptly put on hold following directives from the Union Culture Ministry.

Among the winners are former diplomat Navtej Sarna, awarded in the English language category for his novel *Crimson Spring*; Hindi writer Mamta Kalia for her memoir *Jeete Jee Allahabad*; and Tamil author Sa Tamilselvan for his work *Thamizh Sirukathaiyin Thadangal* in the literary criticism genre. "Eight books of poetry, four novels, six books of short stories, two essays, one literary criticism, one autobiography, and two memoirs have won the Sahitya Akademi Awards 2025," the Akademi said in a statement.

Others named in the 2025 awards are Prasan



Former diplomat Navtej Sarna's *Crimson Spring* has won the award in the English language category. FILE PHOTO

Bandyopadhyay for *Shrestha Kabita* in Bengali; Yogesh Vaidya for *Bhankhaduki* in Gujarati; Amresh Nugadoni for *Dada Seerisa Tunde* in Kannada; N. Prabhakaran for *Mazayama-meshyar* in Malayalam; Raja Bavisakar for *Kalyanilya Resha* in Marathi; Nandini Sidha Reddy for *Animesha* in Telugu; Jinder for *Safety Kit* in Punjabi; and Jitender Kumar Soni for *Bharkhazma*

in Rajasthani. The awardees will receive a casket containing an engraved copper plaque, a shawl, and an amount of ₹1 lakh at a ceremony on March 31.

The Akademi had cancelled its press conference for the announcement on December 18 last, after a last minute directive from the Union Culture Ministry cited a need for the "restructuring" of the awards.



- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Sahitya Akademi:** Established in 1954, it is India's National Academy of Letters. It is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Culture, dedicated to the promotion of literature in Indian languages.

- **24 Languages:** The Akademi recognizes 22 languages listed in the **Eighth Schedule** of the Indian Constitution, plus **English** and **Rajasthani**.

- **Literary Criticism:** A genre of writing that evaluates, analyzes, and interprets literary works. Example: Sa Tamilselvan's winning work on Tamil short stories.

- **Autonomous Body:** An entity that has the power of self-government. While funded by the government, it traditionally maintains independence in its creative and award-selection processes.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core of the recent development involves the intersection of state patronage and artistic independence.

- **Recognition of Diversity:** The awards span various genres—poetry, novels, memoirs, and essays—reflecting the multifaceted nature of Indian literature.

- **Administrative Intervention:** The three-month delay due to "restructuring" directives from the Union Culture Ministry highlights a shift in the relationship between the executive and autonomous cultural institutions.

- **Linguistic Parity:** By awarding works in languages like Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, and Santhali (alongside Hindi and English), the Akademi reinforces the "Idea of India" as a multilingual entity.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence:** Early 20th-century literary movements (like the Progressive Writers' Movement) sought to use literature as a tool for social reform and anti-colonial resistance.
- **Post-Independence (1954):** The government established the Sahitya Akademi to foster "cultural unity" in a newly partitioned and diverse nation.
- **Expansion:** Over decades, the number of recognized languages grew from the initial constitutional list to include English and Rajasthani to reflect living literary traditions.
- **Modern Era:** Recent years have seen debates over "Award Wapsi" (returning awards) as a form of political protest, followed by the current phase of administrative restructuring to align institutional goals with national policy.

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **GS1 (2020):** "The rock-cut architecture represents one of the most important sources of our knowledge of early Indian art and history. Discuss." (Theme: Sources of Culture).
- **GS1 (2018):** "Safeguarding the Indian Art Heritage is the need of the moment. Discuss."
- **Essay (2021):** "Philosophy of wantlessness is Utopian, while materialism is a chimera." (Relevant to the lifestyle and values expressed in Indian literature).



## Core Institutional Framework



**India's National Academy of Letters**  
Established in 1954, it is an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture that serves as the premier literary institution for recognition and translation.



### The 24-Language Mandate

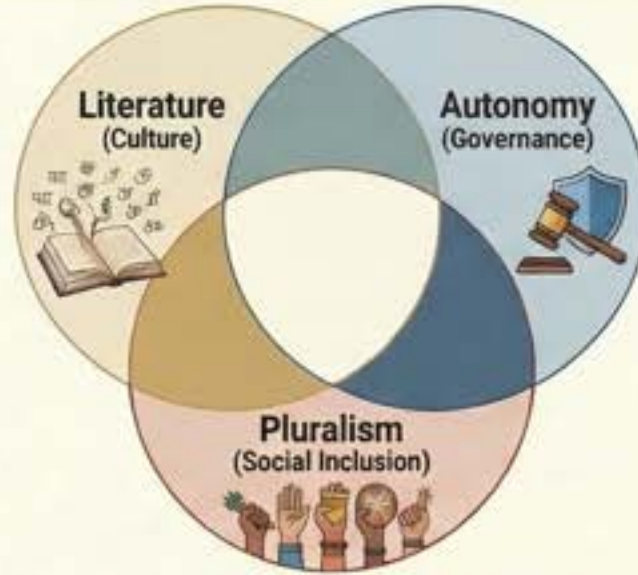
The Akademi recognizes 22 languages from the Eighth Schedule plus English and Rajasthani, ensuring cultural representation beyond constitutional lists.



### The Sahitya Akademi Award

An annual honor for "outstanding merit" comprising a copper plaque, a shawl, and a ₹1,00,000 prize, serving as a form of cultural canonization.

### Governance Hierarchy / Selection Process



## The Philosophy of Literary Pluralism

**"Indian Literature is one, though written in many languages."**

This motto reflects the Akademi's foundational belief in a federated and layered cultural identity rather than a centrally imposed one.

### Cultural Federalism & Symbolic Equality

डोडो डगूरी सधली

By honoring works in languages like Bodo, Dogri, and Santhali, the Akademi recognizes the equal dignity of diverse linguistic communities.

### Beyond Fiction: Diverse Genres



The awards recognize poetry, novels, memoirs, essays, and literary criticism, broadening the definition of "high literature" in the 21st century.

## Governance & The Autonomy Debate



### The "Arm's-Length" Principle

Traditionally, the state provides financial support without interfering in the jury-led selection process, a precedent set by its first president, Jawaharlal Nehru.

### The 2025 "Restructuring" Challenge

A Ministry of Culture directive required prior approval for awards, creating a tension between state oversight and institutional independence.



### Accountability vs. Independence

Ministry seeks transparent use of public funds via MoUs



Critics argue that political vetting risks a "chilling effect" on free expression.

## UPSC Syllabus Integration (GS Linkages)



### GS Paper 1: Indian Culture

Covers salient aspects of literature from ancient to modern times and the role of language in shaping national identity.



### GS Paper 2: Governance & Polity

Focuses on the role of statutory/autonomous bodies and issues arising from government interventions and federalism.



### GS Paper 4: Ethics

Highlights the values of impartiality, intellectual integrity, and the "Artist's Dilemma" when state honors conflict with personal dissent.



### Strengthen Institutional Autonomy

Codify the "arm's-length" relationship to ensure jury selections remain insulated from arbitrary external pressures.

## The Way Forward



### National Translation Mission

Link awards to funded translations across all 24 languages to bridge regional cultural gaps and create a "Digital Literary Commons".



### Transparent Restructuring

Ensure any reform of award criteria involves consultation with writers and academics rather than just bureaucratic oversight.

# USCIRF is creating a distorted picture of India, says Centre

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), in its latest report, has presented a "distorted and selective picture of India", the External Affairs Ministry said on Monday.

"For several years now, the USCIRF has persisted in presenting a distorted and selective picture of India, relying on questionable sources and ideological narratives rather than objective facts. Such repeated misrepresentations only undermine the credibility of the Commission itself," Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said after the USCIRF in its latest report called for "targeted sanctions" against India's external intelligence agency, the Research & Analysis Wing, and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), "for their responsibility and tolerance of several violations of religious freedom by freezing those individuals' and entities assets and barring their entry into the United States".

The report further said that bilateral trade policies with India should be linked to "improvements in religious freedoms".



Randhir Jaiswal

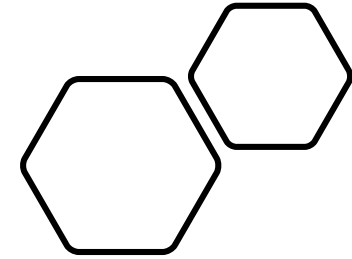
"Instead of persisting with selective criticism of India, USCIRF would do well to reflect on the disturbing incidents of vandalism and attacks on Hindu temples in the United States," Mr. Jaiswal said.

## **'Needs attention'**

"Growing intolerance and intimidation of members of the Indian diaspora in the United States merit serious attention," Mr. Jaiswal added.

There have been several incidents of violence against individuals belonging to the Indian community in the U.S. as well as members of the Indian diaspora in the U.S. in recent years.

There have also been several incidents of vandalism at Hindu temples and properties that India has urged the U.S. to address.



### • **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **USCIRF:** An independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission created by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998. It monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad and makes policy recommendations to the President, Secretary of State, and Congress.
- **Targeted Sanctions:** Measures aimed at specific individuals, entities, or sectors rather than a whole country. These often include asset freezes or travel bans (e.g., under the Global Magnitsky Act).
- **CPC (Country of Particular Concern):** A designation by the U.S. for countries that engage in or tolerate "systematic, ongoing, and egregious" violations of religious freedom.
- **Sovereignty:** The supreme power or authority of a state to govern itself. India often invokes this to reject "external interference" in its internal legislative or social matters.
- **Indian Diaspora:** The community of people of Indian origin living outside India. They serve as a bridge for "Soft Power" but can also be targets of hate crimes, as noted by the MEA.

### **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The USCIRF Allegation:** The Commission argues that religious freedom in India is on a downward trend, citing specific domestic policies and the role of state/non-state actors. It suggests linking trade to human rights and sanctioning agencies like RAW.
- **The Government of India's Rebuttal:** The MEA characterizes the report as "distorted," "selective," and "ideologically driven." India argues that the USCIRF lacks a locus standi (right to interfere) in India's internal affairs.
- **The "Reciprocity" Argument:** India points to rising "Hinduphobia" and vandalism of temples in the U.S., suggesting that the U.S. should fix its own internal issues regarding the Indian diaspora before criticizing others.
- **The Credibility Gap:** India asserts that by relying on "questionable sources," the USCIRF is undermining its own international standing.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **1998:** U.S. passes the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), creating the USCIRF.
- **2002–2005:** Post-Godhra riots, the USCIRF begins taking a critical stance on India. In 2005, it was instrumental in the U.S. decision to deny a visa to then-CM Narendra Modi.
- **2014–Present:** A consistent pattern has emerged where the USCIRF recommends India be designated as a "Country of Particular Concern" (CPC), but the U.S. State Department—weighing strategic interests—has consistently rejected this recommendation.
- **2020s:** The rhetoric has shifted from mere "concerns" to calls for "targeted sanctions" and linking trade to religious freedom, marking an escalation in the Commission's stance.
  
- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**
- **UPSC 2017 (GS 2):** "The critical determination of any nation's foreign policy is its national interest." Discuss in the context of India-U.S. relations.
- **UPSC 2019 (GS 2):** "The Indian Constitution's concept of secularism is different from the Western model." Discuss.
- **UPSC 2023 (GS 2):** "The expansion and strengthening of the Indian diaspora has a significant role to play in India's foreign policy." Comment.

A comprehensive analysis of the recurring friction between India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). The core lies in a philosophical clash between U.S. Universalism and India's Westphalian Sovereignty, with shared Indo-Pacific interests ensuring the strategic partnership remains resilient despite diplomatic noise.

## USCIRF ALLEGATION (Universalism)

- Claims downward trend in religious freedom, citing anti-conversion laws and 'majoritarian' policies.
- Recommends linking trade/arms sales to human rights.
- **Philosophical Base:** Universalism (global scrutiny of rights).



## KEY TERMINOLOGY & DESIGNATIONS

**USCIRF:** Independent, bipartisan U.S. federal commission to monitor universal religious freedom and advise President/Congress.

**GPC:** Designation for nations engaging in 'systematic, ongoing, and egregious' violations, potentially triggering sanctions.

**Targeted Sanctions:** Specific measures (asset freezes, travel bans) affected at individuals/agencies (e.g., RAW).



## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION & ESCALATION



## INDIA'S REBUTTAL (Sovereignty & Principled Distance)

- Characterizes reports as 'distorted' and 'biased.'
- Argues USCIRF lacks locus standi to interfere in internal constitutional matters.
- **Philosophical Baze:** Cultural Relativism and Principled Distance (unique social fabric requires contextual interpretation).



## THE 'RECIPROCITY' ARGUMENT

- Highlights rising 'Hinduphebia' and temple vandalism in the U.S.
- Suggests the U.S. address its own internal diaspora issues.

## UPSC SYLLABUS & STRATEGY LINKAGES

GS Paper II (Polity & IR)	GS Paper IV (Ethics)	NCERT Connection
Relevant to Fundamental Rights (Arts 25-20), Secularism (Indian vs. Western), and effect of developed countries' policies.	Focuses on International Morality, ethical issues of 'Global Policing' vs. 'National Sovereignty'.	Links to Class 11 Political Theory (Secularism), Class 12 Politics in India Since Independence (Nation-Building).

## INDIAN VS. WESTERN SECULARISM

Western Model	VS	Indian Model
Strict separation; wall between Church and State.		No state religion, but state can intervene for reform.
State is indifferent to religious affairs.		State can regulate secular aspects (e.g., temple entry).
Minority Rights: Focus on individual liberty.		Focus on individual liberty and group/minority rights.

# Jaishankar discusses West Asia situation with EU counterparts

**The Hindu Bureau**

LONDON

On the second day of his Brussels visit, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met with European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and had discussions, including about the situation in West Asia and Ukraine. Mr. Jaishankar was invited to interact with Foreign Ministers from the 27-member bloc, during the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting on Monday, as per a statement from the External Affairs Ministry.

"We also discussed developments in the Middle East and in Ukraine. De-escalation, stability and energy security are our shared objectives," Ms. Von der Leyen said in a post on X, about her meeting with Mr. Jaishankar. The EU and India were focused on implementing the trade deal signed in January in New



S. Jaishankar meeting Foreign Ministers from the EU at the Foreign Affairs Council Meeting in Brussels on Monday. ANI

Delhi, "as soon as possible", she said.

Thanking the EU's top diplomat Kaja Kallas for inviting him to the Foreign Affairs Council, Mr. Jaishankar said, "Our conversation today therefore covered trade, investment, technology, mobility and defence in particular."

"The stronger convergence between India and the EU in a multipolar world is also expressed in

closer consultations," he added, saying West Asia, Ukraine, and the Indo-Pacific were discussed at the meeting. On Sunday, Mr. Jaishankar publicly thanked Armenia for the safe evacuation of 550 Indian nationals from Iran.

Ahead of the meeting, Ms. Kallas had outlined various options the EU was considering to open the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial body of water through

which a quarter of the world's oil passes.

Mr. Jaishankar had said that India would be happy to share what New Delhi was doing with Tehran, with European countries, although he acknowledged that every country had a different relationship with Iran. He had also said there was no *quid pro quo* involved with Iran permitting the passage of two Indian-flagged tankers carrying LPG crossing the Strait on Saturday, saying this was based on a "history of dealing" with each other.

Calling the conflict "most unfortunate", he called for other countries to engage with Tehran. The Minister had also emphasised that India did not have a "blanket arrangement" with Tehran for safe passage of ships, but it was being arranged on a case-by-case basis and discussions were ongoing.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Multipolar World:** A global distribution of power where more than two states have nearly equal amounts of military, cultural, and economic influence.

- *Example:* Instead of just the US or China dominating, India, the EU, and Japan act as independent power centers.

- **Foreign Affairs Council (FAC):** The body within the EU responsible for the union's external action, including foreign policy, defense, and trade.

- **Strait of Hormuz:** A narrow waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. It is the world's most important oil "choke point."

- **De-escalation:** The reduction of the intensity of a conflict or potentially violent situation.

- **Quid Pro Quo:** A Latin phrase meaning "something for something"—an exchange of goods or services, where one transfer is contingent upon the other.

- **Energy Security:** The uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price.

## **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **Strategic Convergence:** The core thesis is that India and the EU are finding "stronger convergence" in their geopolitical outlooks. This is driven by shared interests in stability in West Asia and Ukraine.

- **The Iran Factor:** A significant point is India's unique diplomatic leverage with Iran. While the West often has a strained relationship with Tehran, India uses its "history of dealing" to secure safe passage for its vessels (like the LPG tankers) without formal "blanket arrangements."

- **Global Commons & Connectivity:** The discussion on the Strait of Hormuz highlights the importance of keeping maritime trade routes open, which is vital for global energy security.

- **Economic Integration:** Beyond security, the push to implement the India-EU trade deal (Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement - BTIA) remains a priority to balance the relationship with economic "skin in the game."

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **1960s–1990s:** India was one of the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with the EEC (European Economic Community) in 1962. However, the relationship remained primarily "buyer-seller" focused.

- **2004 (Strategic Partnership):** The relationship was elevated to a Strategic Partnership, moving beyond trade to include security and governance.

- **The 2021 Connectivity Partnership:** Launched to provide an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), focusing on digital, energy, and transport links.

- **Present Day:** The relationship has pivoted toward "Geopolitics first," necessitated by the Russia-Ukraine conflict and volatility in the Middle East (West Asia).

**Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**

- **UPSC 2023 (GS-II):** "The 'India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor' (IMEC) is being seen as a challenge to China's BRI. Discuss."

- **UPSC 2022 (GS-II):** "Clean energy is the order of the day. Describe India's changing policy towards Climate Change in various international fora in the context of COP26." (Relevant to Energy Security discussion).

- **UPSC 2017 (GS-II):** "The Indian diaspora has a decisive role to play in the politics and economy of America and European Countries. Comment."



# The India-EU Strategic Pivot: Navigating a Multipolar World

## CORE PHILOSOPHY: THE MULTIPOLAR LOGIC

- MULTIPOLAR WORLD & STRATEGIC AUTONOMY:** India & EU advocate for a global distribution of power (India, EU, Japan) to influence international order, not just two superpowers.
- VASUDHAIVA KUTUMBAKAM:** India's "The world is one family" lens enables engagement with diverse actors, avoiding zero-sum game diplomacy.



**THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ  
A GLOBAL CHOKEPOINT**  
Connecting Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman, handles over 25% of global seaborne oil trade; vital for India's energy security.



WEST (EU/US)



## ECONOMIC INTEGRATION & THE TRADE PILLAR



1962

Diplomatic Relations Established (Trade-focused)

2004

Strategic Partnership Launched (Security & Governance)

2021

Connectivity Partnership (Digital, Energy, Transport Links - alternative to BRI)

PRESENT

"Geopolitics First" (Driven by Ukraine & West Asia volatility, de-risking).

- BEYOND "BUYER-SELLER" RELATIONS:** Relationship pivoted to broad Strategic Partnership involving defense, technology, and governance.

- INDIA-EU BTIA:** Finalizing long-pending FTA is a priority for economic foundation and de-risking from China.



- IMPLEMENTATION RISKS:** Disagreements over dairy, automobiles, and professional mobility stall full realization.

Acts as a diplomatic intermediary, maintaining robust ties with rival camps to facilitate de-escalation.

INDIA AS A "BRIDGE POWER"



MIDDLE EAST (IRAN/GULF STATES)



## THE WEST ASIA NERVE CENTER & ENERGY



- CASE-BY-CASE SAFE PASSAGE:** India uses "history of dealing" to negotiate safe passage for tankers with Iran individually during crises, instead of broad treaties.
- DIVERSIFYING CONNECTIVITY (IMEC & INSTC):** Strategic alternatives to reduce reliance on single maritime chokepoints.



## CRISIS DIPLOMACY & HUMAN SECURITY



- EVACUATION DIPLOMACY IN ACTION:** Successfully evacuated 550 nationals from Iran via Armenia and Azerbaijan during escalations, highlighting the social dimension.
- PROTECTION OF THE DIASPORA:** Over 9 million Indians in West Asia; safety and stability of remittances are non-negotiable drivers.

# 'EU, UN discussing initiative for Hormuz Strait'

U.S. President Donald Trump had called on NATO allies and other countries to assist in forcibly opening the Strait; Prime Minister Keir Starmer said the U.K. 'will not be drawn into a wider war'; a German government spokesperson said, 'This war has nothing to do with NATO; it's not NATO's war'; Italy's government says it is not at war with anyone

**Sriram Lakshman**  
LONDON

The EU is in discussion with the UN on a Black Sea Grain initiative type arrangement to open up the Strait of Hormuz, according to its top diplomat Kaja Kallas. The strait, a waterway for a fifth of the world's oil supply, has been virtually closed by Iran following a conflict in the region which began after Israel and the U.S. struck Iran on February 28, sending oil prices soaring to above \$100 per barrel.

Speaking ahead of an EU foreign affairs meeting in Brussels on Monday morning, Ms. Kallas said that she had discussed adopting a Black Sea initiative type arrangement for

the Strait with UN Secretary General António Guterres. The Black Sea initiative, facilitated by the UN and Turkey, sought to ensure the safe export of grain and fertilizer from Ukraine's ports after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022.

Ms. Kallas pointed out that 85% of the oil that goes through the Strait of Hormuz is destined for Asia, and that the blocking of the Strait was also impacting fertilizer production and warned of food shortages next year if the Strait isn't opened up.

Ms. Kallas also suggested one option was to expand Aspides, the EU's security mission to protect vessels in the Red Sea from attacks by Houthi militants in Yemen. German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul



European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas speaks during a press conference. AFP

had said he was "very sceptical" of using Aspides to secure the passage.

"...We will discuss with Member States whether it is possible to really change the mandate of this mission. The point is that whether the Member States are willing to actual-

ly use this mission," she said, adding that a third option was to form a "Coalition of the Willing" to open the Strait.

U.S. President Donald Trump had called on NATO allies and other countries to assist in forcibly opening the Strait, telling the *Finan-*

*cial Times* on Sunday that it would be "very bad" for the future of NATO if allies did not help the U.S. in opening the passage.

The easing of U.S. sanctions on Russia was a "dangerous precedent", Ms. Kallas said, adding that the closure of the Strait of Hormuz was to Russia's benefit, helping it to fund its war with Ukraine. New Delhi has also been in talks with Teheran regarding the safety of Indian vessels passing through the Strait.

European leaders resisted pressure from Mr. Trump to join Washington and Israel's war with Iran. "We will not be drawn into a wider war," British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Monday as he announced millions of pounds in assistance for

households facing rising energy costs.

Referring to the British opposition parties, Mr. Starmer said: "They would have rushed the U.K. headlong into this war, without the full picture of what they were sending our forces into and without a plan to get us out."

Mr. Starmer said a diplomatic solution was needed once the armed conflict ended, "to constrain the threat posed by Iran", which he suggested lay with Teheran's ability to rebuild a nuclear programme, pose a ballistic missile threat and to arm proxy militias.

"This war has nothing to do with NATO. It's not NATO's war," German government spokesperson Stefan Kornelius said on Monday.

The U.S. and Israel did not consult Europe before the war, Mr. Kornelius said.

"Italy is not at war with anyone and sending military ships in a war zone would mean entering the war," Italian Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini said, as per news agency Reuters.

France, like the U.K., has emphasised that it is focused on defence in the region not offensive strikes. French President Emmanuel Macron said on Sunday he had spoken to Iranian President Massoud Pezeshkian, and conveyed that France was only taking "strictly defensive" actions to protect its assets in the region and its regional partners and that it was "unacceptable" for France to be targeted.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Strait of Hormuz:** A narrow waterway between Oman and Iran connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea. It is the world's most important oil chokepoint.

- **Black Sea Grain Initiative:** A 2022 agreement brokered by the UN and Turkey to allow grain exports from Ukraine during the Russian invasion. It serves as a model for "humanitarian corridors" in conflict zones.

- **Operation Aspides:** An EU naval mission established to protect merchant vessels in the Red Sea from Houthi attacks. It is "defensive" by mandate, meaning it intercepts missiles but does not strike land targets.

- **Coalition of the Willing:** A group of nations acting together outside the formal structures of international organizations (like NATO or the UN) to achieve a specific military or political objective.

- **Chokepoint:** A geographical feature on land or at sea which an armed force is forced to pass, sometimes on a substantially narrower front and therefore greatly reducing its combat power.

### **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **The Diplomatic Alternative:** The EU and UN are exploring a non-military, "Black Sea style" deal to ensure the flow of oil and fertilizer. This acknowledges that a military solution might be too costly or escalatory.

- **Transatlantic Divergence:** A clear rift has emerged. The U.S. (under the Trump administration) favors a "forceful opening" and views NATO participation as a test of the alliance's relevance. Conversely, European powers (U.K., Germany, Italy, France) are prioritizing de-escalation to avoid a "wider war."

- **Economic Contagion:** The closure has pushed oil above \$100/barrel, threatening global inflation. Furthermore, the impact on fertilizer production poses a direct threat to global food security in the coming year.

- **Geopolitical Realignment:** The EU suggests the closure benefits Russia by diverting global attention and resources, while also boosting the value of Russian energy exports.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
  - **Pre-1979:** Under the Shah, Iran acted as the "Gendarme of the Persian Gulf," ensuring the flow of oil with U.S. backing.
  - **The Tanker War (1980–1988):** During the Iran-Iraq War, both sides attacked commercial tankers. This led to the U.S. "Operation Earnest Will," the largest naval convoy operation since WWII.
  - **2015–2018 (JCPOA Era):** Relative stability following the Nuclear Deal, though tensions simmered regarding Iran's regional proxies.
  - **2019–Present:** Increased "grey-zone" warfare, including drone strikes on tankers and the seizure of vessels, culminating in the current total blockade following the February 2024 kinetic strikes.
- 
- **Previous Years' Questions (UPSC/APSC)**
  - **UPSC 2023 (GS 2):** "The expansion and strengthening of NATO and a stronger US-Europe strategic partnership has a direct impact on India's security."
  - **UPSC 2017 (GS 2):** "The Question of India's Energy Security constitutes the most important part of India's economic progress. Analyze."
  - **UPSC 2019 (GS 2):** "The long-sustained image of India as a leader of the oppressed and marginalized nations has disappeared on account of its newfound role in the emerging world order." (Relates to India's role in West Asian conflicts).

# The Strait of Hormuz Crisis: Geopolitics, Energy Security, and India's Strategic Response

## THE GLOBAL CHOKEPOINT: A GEOGRAPHIC & ECONOMIC REALITY

**THE WORLD'S MOST CRITICAL CHOKEPOINT**

IRAN, PERSIAN GULF, STRAIT OF HORMUZ, GULF OF OMAN, OMAN

**20%** of Global Oil & Massive LNG Flows

Approximately one-fifth of global crude oil passes through this point daily, making it a "geopolitical barometer" for global markets.

**ECONOMIC CONTAGION: OIL AT \$100+/BARREL**

The current blockade has spiked energy prices, threatening global inflation and disrupting "Just-in-Time" supply chains.

## THE TRANSATLANTIC RIFT: HARD POWER VS. DIPLOMACY

**U.S. REALISM**

**U.S. Realism vs. EU Liberal Institutionalism**

The U.S. favors a "Coalition of the Willing" for forceful opening, while the EU/UN proscribe anti-military, structured agreements like the "Black Sea" model.

**EU/UN LIBERAL INSTITUTIONALISM**

**This is Not NATO's War**

European powers (U.K., Germany, Italy, France) are resisting military entanglement to avoid "forever wars" and regional escalation.

**VS**

**OPERATION ASPIDES: A DEFENSIVE MANDATE**

An EU naval mission that protects merchant vessels but is restricted from striking land targets, highlighting the preference for de-escalation.

Military Coercion / Hard Power	Primary Tool	Diplomacy / Negotiated Passage
Coalition of the Willing	Framework	UN Led Mediation / International Law
Regional Escalation / Wider War	Risk	Implementation Speed / Low Feasibility
Operation Earnest Will (1988)	Precedent	Black Sea Grain Initiative (2022)

## STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA

**THE ENERGY-FOOD-FERTILIZER NEXUS**

Disruptions in gas flows through Hormuz spike fertilizer costs, directly impacting Indian farm economics and food price inflation.

**MULTI-VECTOR DIPLOMACY & STRATEGIC AUTONOMY**

Tehran

Washington

Tel Aviv

India maintains "strategic autonomy" by engaging Tehran, Washington, and Tel Aviv simultaneously to protect its national interests.

**DIASPORA & SEAFARER SAFETY**

The crisis puts millions of Indian migrant workers and seafarers in the region at direct physical and economic risk.

## THE WAY FORWARD: A ROADMAP FOR STABILITY

- UN-LED MEDIATION & SAFE CORRIDORS**

Adapting the "Black Sea Grain Initiative" template to create monitored maritime corridors for energy and fertilizers.
- DIVERSIFICATION OF ENERGY ROUTES**

Accelerating bypass projects like the East-West Pipeline in Saudi Arabia and expanding India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves.
- STRENGTHENING MARITIME CAPACITY**

Enhancing India's Navy-Coast Guard coordination and maritime domain awareness to protect commercial shipping.

# *One Battle After Another* wins Oscar, in coronation for Paul Thomas Anderson

**Associated Press**

LOS ANGELES

Paul Thomas Anderson's *One Battle After Another* was crowned best picture at the 98th Academy Awards, handing Hollywood's top honour to a comic, multi-generational American saga of political resistance.

The ceremony on Sunday, which also saw Michael B. Jordan win best actor and *Sinners* cinematographer Autumn Durald Arkapaw make Oscar history as the first female director of photography to win the award, was a long-in-coming coronation for Mr. Anderson, a San Fernando Valley native who made his first short at age 18 and has been one of America's most lionised filmmakers for decades. Before Sunday, Mr. Anderson had never won an Os-



Director Paul Thomas Anderson and cast members of *One Battle After Another* pose after winning the Oscar on Sunday. AFP

car. But *One Battle After Another*, the favourite coming in, won six Oscars, including best director and best adapted screenplay for Mr. Anderson, the Oscars' first trophy for best casting and best supporting actor for an absent Sean Penn.

"I wrote this movie for my kids to say sorry for the housekeeping mess that we left in this world – we're handing off to them,"

said Mr. Anderson while accepting the screenplay trophy. "But also with the encouragement that they will be the generation that hopefully brings us some common sense and decency."

Ryan Coogler's Jim Crow-set, blues-soaked vampire tale *Sinners*, which came in with a record 16 nominations, also landed some big and even historic wins. Mr. Coogler,

the widely loved filmmaker, won the first Oscar in an unblemished career that started out with Mr. Jordan in 2013's *Fruitvale Station*.

Ms. Arkapaw was also the first Black person to win for best cinematography. Only the fourth female cinematographer ever nominated, her win was a long-in-coming triumph for women behind the camera.

"I really want all the women in room to stand up," said Ms. Arkapaw. "Because I don't feel like I get here without you guys."

Jessie Buckley won best actress for her performance as Agnes Shakespeare in *Hamnet*, making her the first Irish performer to ever win in the category.

Amy Madigan won best supporting actress for her performance in the horror thriller *Weapons*.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **The Academy Awards (Oscars):** The most prestigious global film awards, serving as a barometer for soft power and cultural shifts in the global North.

- **Cinematography:** The art of motion-picture photography. In a UPSC context, this relates to the technical and creative aspects of the "Creative Economy."

- **Best Casting:** A new Oscar category acknowledging the labor of selecting actors to fit a narrative—reflecting the evolving recognition of diverse skill sets in the industry.

- **Jim Crow Era:** A period in U.S. history (late 19th to mid-20th century) characterized by state and local laws that enforced racial segregation.

- **Soft Power:** A term coined by Joseph Nye, referring to a country's ability to influence others through culture and values rather than coercion (Hard Power).

## Main Arguments and Substantive Parts

- **The "Coronation" of Auteur Cinema:** The victory of Paul Thomas Anderson signifies the industry's return to "auteur theory"—where the director is the primary creative force—after years of franchise dominance.

- **Representation as a Milestone:** The historic win of Autumn Durald Arkapaw highlights the breaking of the "glass ceiling" for women and Black professionals in technical fields like cinematography.

- **Cinema as Political Resistance:** The crowning of *One Battle After Another* suggests that the Academy is prioritizing narratives that mirror modern anxieties regarding "decency" and "common sense" in governance.

- **Intergenerational Responsibility:** A key theme presented is the "housekeeping mess" left by previous generations, framing the youth as agents of restorative justice and sanity.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-1960s:** Cinema was largely a tool for nationalistic propaganda or escapism, with minimal representation for minorities or women in lead technical roles.
- **The 1970s (New Hollywood):** The rise of directors like Anderson's predecessors, who brought grit and social realism to the screen.
- **The "Oscars So White" Movement (2015-16):** A pivotal turning point where global pressure forced the Academy to diversify its voting body.
- **2020s-Present:** A shift toward "inclusive excellence," where diversity is no longer an outlier but a standard for Best Picture contenders.

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **GS 1 (2018):** "Assess the impact of globalised culture on Indian society." (Relevant to how international awards influence Indian cinematic standards).
- **Ethics (2017):** "The crisis of ethical values in modern times is traced to a narrow perception of the good life." (Relevant to the "decency and common sense" argument).
- **Essay (2023):** "The visionary decision-making happens at the intersection of intuition and logic."

This analysis bridges the gap between the glitz of Hollywood and the rigors of the UPSC GS Papers, exploring cinema as a potent tool for Soft Power, Political Resistance, and a contemporary case study in social justice, gender parity, and the creative economy.

**CORE CONCEPTS & UPSC TERMINOLOGY**



**Soft Power (Joseph Nye)**

A country's ability to influence others through culture and voices (like cinema), rather than coercion; a critical component of international relations.



**The Creative Economy**

Encompasses sectors like cinematography and seating where intellectual and cultural production generates significant economic and symbolic value.



**Substantive Equality**

Moving beyond formal equality to achieve fair participation for marginalized groups in high-value technical and leadership roles.



**PHILOSOPHICAL & ETHICAL UNDERPINNINGS**



**Intergenerational Justice**

The moral obligation of the present generation to leave a better world for the next, closely aligning with the Gandhian 'Trusteeship' concept.



**"Recognition as Empowerment"**

Based on the belief that 'seeing is being,' symbolic capital in cinema provides the necessary inspiration for future generations to enter STEM and technical arts.



**Ethical Representation**

Avoiding 'tokenism' and 'virtue-signaling' in favor of consistent institutional support for marginalized voices.

**HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF GLOBAL CINEMA**



**Pre-1960s: Propaganda & Escapism**

Cinema was primarily a tool for nationalistic messaging with minimal representation for women or minorities in lead technical roles.



**2015-16: The "Oscars So White" Movement**

A pivotal turning point where global pressure forced cultural institutions to diversify their voting bodies and criteria.



**2020s-Present: Inclusive Excellence**

A standard where diversity is no longer an outlier but a core requirement for "Best Picture" contenders.

**MILESTONES IN REPRESENTATION & SOCIAL JUSTICE**



**Breaking the Technical Glass Ceiling**

The historic win of Autumn Duraud Arkapaw marks the first time a woman and person of color won for Best Cinematography, signaling a shift in institutional access.



**Cinema as Political Resistance**

The victory of "One Battle After Another" reflects the Academy's prioritization of narratives mirroring modern anxieties about governance and 'common sense.'



**Institutionalizing Diversity**

The introduction of the 'Best Casting' category formally recognizes inclusive storytelling as a distinct professional craft.

**UPSC SYLLABUS MAPPING (GS PAPERS)**



**GS Paper 1: Society & Culture**

Focuses on the role of women, the impact of globalization on Indian society, and cinema as a mirror of cultural change.

**GS Paper 2: Governance & Social Justice**

Explores issues related to the management of the social sector and policies for the development of marginalized groups.

**GS Paper 4: Ethics & Human Values**

Highlights lessons from the lives of great performers and the ethical responsibility of artists toward the 'political zeitgeist'.

**THE WAY FORWARD (POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS)**



**Fostering Long-term Inclusion**

Moving beyond 'insta' to ensure consistent access for women and minorities in high-budget 'tempore' film productions.



**Educational Integration**

Integrating technical arts and cinematography into mainstream vocational education to bridge the gender gap in filmmaking.



**Global Collaboration**

Using cinematic platforms to foster dialogue across borders and address global issues like climate change and inequality.

● SCIENCE

# As NavIC loses atomic clock, India's own GPS remains a challenge

Anonna Dutt

New Delhi, March 16

EVER SINCE its inception, India's regional navigation system has been plagued by problems affecting its positioning data. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) last week said that the atomic clock of one of five satellites that were still providing this data had stopped working.

"IRNSS-1F satellite launched in March 2016 has completed its design mission life of 10 years... On 13th March 2026, procured on-board Atomic clock stopped functioning," it said. The space agency added that the satellite will continue to provide one-way broadcast messaging services.

Atomic clocks are key for satellites being able to provide positioning data used for applications such as navigation of vehicles, mapping and surveying, and even planning large constructions with accuracy.

## A GPS for India

The Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), operationally called Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC),



NavIC was planned to provide positioning data over the Indian subcontinent. X/ISRO

was planned to be a seven-satellite system to provide positioning data over the Indian subcontinent and 1500 km around it: a regional system similar to the American GPS.

With all its satellites functioning and placed directly above the region, NavIC was designed to provide location accuracy of around 10 metres over the Indian landmass and surrounding countries. This ensures better availability of signals even in difficult

## Mapping alternatives

- There are four satellite systems that provide global navigation data: the US's GPS, the Russian GLONASS, the European Galileo, and the Chinese Beidou.
- Japan has a four-satellite system called Quasi-Zenith Satellite System that can augment GPS signals over the country.

geographical locations compared with GPS, whose signals are received in India at an angle that makes it difficult to access in certain areas like valleys and forests.

However, NavIC has been running into troubles since its successful 2023 launch.

## NavIC's track record

The constellation had five satellites that could provide positioning data: IRNSS-1B, 1C, 1F, 1I, and NVS-01. Atomic clocks on board some of the initial satellites started failing early on, with replacement satellites planned to keep the system running. Now, the atomic clock on board the IRNSS-1F has also been lost.

Besides the failing atomic clocks, some of the initial satellites are also aging out. IRNSS-1A was launched into orbit in 2013, and 1B and 1C followed in 2014. 1A is almost defunct, and the other two are also past their 10-year mission lives.

The last of the first-generation IRNSS satellites was 1I — a replacement for the failed 1H launch — which was launched in 2018. IRNSS-1H, launched in 2017 to replace 1A, failed to reach orbit due to operational issues.

NVS-02, the second of the new-generation satellites meant for NavIC (after NVS-01), was successfully placed in a highly elliptical transfer orbit in ISRO's 100th launch in January 2025. But it failed to move to its final orbit due to an electrical failure.

Another criticism ISRO faced over NavIC is the delay in developing the user segment. A 2018 report by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India pointed out delays in developing technology to that end.

Now, NavIC data is in use for aviation, shipping, and railways. Several new cell phones have chipsets that can use this data.

## Advancements in new satellites

The most important change to the new-generation NavIC satellite was an indigenously developed atomic clock developed by ISRO. The newer generation satellites also have a longer mission life: 12 years.

Importantly, they send signals in a third frequency, L1, besides the two (L5 and S) in existing satellites. As GPS commonly uses L1, this improves interoperability with other positioning systems. L1 also helps in using NavIC data in wearable devices.



- **Key Terms and Explanations**
- **NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation):** India's independent regional navigation satellite system. Unlike GPS, which is global, NavIC is designed to cover India and a region extending **1,500 km** around its borders.
- **Atomic Clock:** The "heart" of a navigation satellite. These clocks use the vibrations of atoms (usually Rubidium or Cesium) to measure time with extreme precision. Since distance is calculated as  $\text{Speed} \times \text{Time}$ , even a nanosecond error in time can lead to a massive error in positioning on the ground.
- **Geosynchronous Orbit (GSO):** An orbit around the Earth with a period equal to the Earth's rotational period. This keeps the satellite over the same general region of the Earth.
- **L1, L5, and S Bands:** These are radio frequency bands. **L5 and S** were the original NavIC frequencies. The **L1** band is the most common frequency for civilian GPS; adding it to NavIC allows your phone or smartwatch to pick up Indian signals more easily.
- **User Segment:** The hardware on the ground (receivers, smartphone chips, antennas) that actually catches the satellite signals and turns them into a "blue dot" on a map.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core premise is that India's quest for "Atmanirbhar" (self-reliant) navigation is facing a critical hardware crisis.

- **The Hardware Attrition:** The system is losing "eyes." With the failure of the atomic clock on **IRNSS-1F** and the failure of **NVS-02** to reach orbit, the constellation is shrinking. A minimum of four satellites is needed for a basic 3D position (latitude, longitude, and altitude), but a larger number is required for reliability.

- **Superiority over GPS (Locally):** NavIC is technically superior for the Indian subcontinent because its satellites are high above the region. GPS satellites are seen at an angle in India, which means their signals can be "blocked" by tall buildings or deep Himalayan valleys.

- **The Transition to NVS:** ISRO is moving from the first-generation (IRNSS) to the second-generation (NVS) satellites. These are heavier, last longer (12 years), and—crucially—feature **indigenous Rubidium atomic clocks** to replace the imported ones that failed.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **The 1999 Trigger:** During the **Kargil War**, the US denied India access to GPS data for the region. This lack of "eyes in the sky" highlighted the strategic vulnerability of depending on foreign systems.
- **2006-2013 (Planning and Delay):** Funding was cleared in 2006, but the first satellite (IRNSS-1A) wasn't launched until 2013.
- **2013-2018 (Constellation Building):** Seven satellites were launched to complete the regional grid. However, by 2017, all three atomic clocks on the first satellite (1A) failed.
- **2023-2025 (Modernization):** ISRO launched **NVS-01** (new generation) in 2023. However, the 2025 failure of **NVS-02** to reach its final orbit due to a pyro-valve malfunction has set the timeline back.
  
- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions (PYQs)**
- **2018 (Prelims):** With reference to the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), consider the following statements... (Focused on coverage area and number of satellites).
- **2023 (Mains, GS3):** "Introduce the concept of NavIC and discuss its significance for India's strategic and economic interests."
- **2017 (Mains, GS3):** "India has achieved remarkable successes in unmanned space missions... discuss the strategic importance of IRNSS."

## THE STRATEGIC GENESIS & REACH

**The 1999 Kargil Trigger**  
The US denial of GPS data during the Kargil War exposed India's strategic vulnerability, sparking the move toward an independent navigation system.

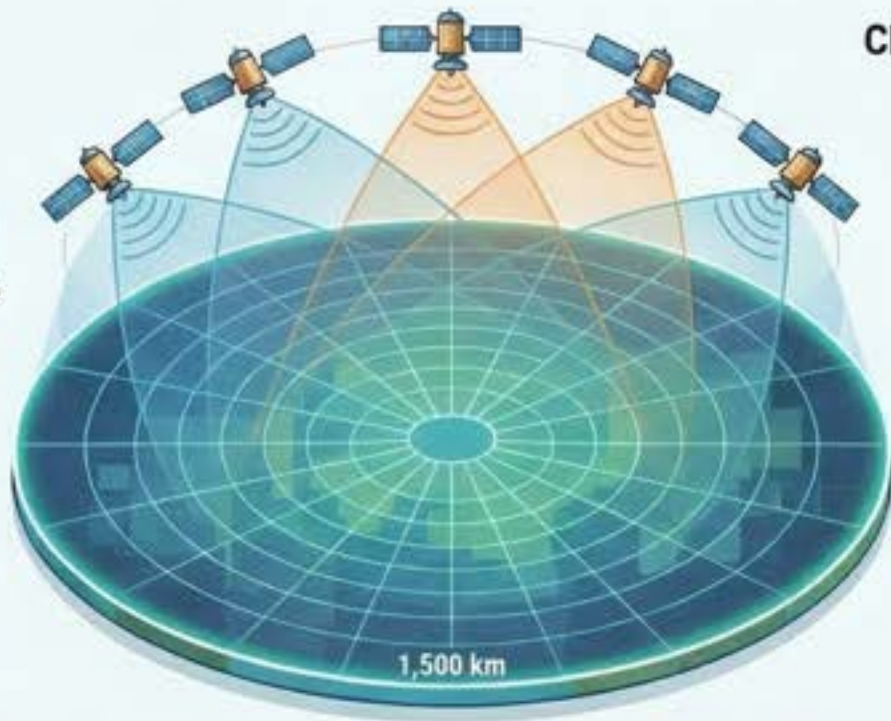


### Regional vs. Global Coverage

Unlike the global GPS, NavIC is a regional system covering the Indian landmass and a surrounding area of approximately 1,500 km.

### The "High-Elevation" Advantage

Because NavIC satellites are placed in high GED/GSO orbits directly over India, they provide better signal availability in deep valleys, forests, and "urban canyons".



## TECHNICAL ARCHITECTURE & THE 'HEART' OF THE SYSTEM



### Atomic Clocks: The Core Component

These ultra-precise clocks measure time via atomic vibrations; even a nanosecond error can cause massive ground positioning inaccuracies.



### The 7-Satellite Constellation

The system requires a minimum of four satellites for 3D positioning (latitude, longitude, altitude), but uses seven for reliable, continuous coverage.

### PNT Services (Standard vs. Restricted)

NavIC provides a Standard Positioning Service (SPS) for civilians and an encrypted Restricted Service (AS) for strategic/defense users.

## CHALLENGES & SETBACKS (HARDWARE CRISIS) ⚠️



### Atomic Clock Attrition

Several first-generation satellites (IRNSS series) suffered failures of their imported European atomic clocks, prematurely ending their navigation utility.



### The NVS-02 Launch Failure (2025)

A pyro-valve malfunction in the oxidizer line prevented the NVS-02 satellite from reaching its intended orbit, delaying constellation replenishment.



### The User Segment Lag

A 2018 CAG report highlighted a decade-long delay in developing receivers, meaning satellites were in space before the ground the ressement.



### The User Segment Lag

A 2018 CAG report highlighted a decade-long delay in developing receivers, meaning satellites were in space before the ground technology to use them was ready.

## THE EVOLUTION: NavIC 2.0 (NVS GENERATION)



First-generation (IRNSS)



NVS



### Indigenous Rubidium Clocks

To ensure technological sovereignty, second-gen satellites (NVS series) now feature home-grown atomic clocks to replace failed imported units.



### The L1 Band Integration

By adding the L1 frequency (common to GPS), ISRO has made it easier for smartphone chipsets (Qualcomm, Apple) to integrate NavIC without expensive hardware changes.



### Extended Mission Longevity

New NVS satellites are designed for a 12-year lifespan, improving the economic and operational sustainability of the constellation.

## COMPARISON TABLE: NavIC vs. GPS

Feature	NavIC (India)	GPS (USA)
Coverage	Regional (India + 1,500km)	Global
Satellite Count	7 (Current design)	30+
Orbit Type	GEO & GSO (Fixed over region)	MED (Moving across sky)
Altitude	~36,000 km	~20,000 km
Ownership	ISRO (Civilian/Military)	US Dept. of Defence

## MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACT (UPSC FOCUS)



### Social & Disaster Utility

Provides critical messaging for fishermen in deep seas (ne cellular network) and precise data for disaster management and "Space Diplomacy" with SAARC nations.



### Technological Epistemology

By controlling the clock, India controls its own "source of truth," ensuring navigation—a vital utility—cannot be "switched off" by foreign

# The 'discrepancies' in India's new GDP data



UDIT MISRA

THE MINISTRY of Statistics and Programme Implementation last month brought out a new series of data for the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is the market value of all final (as against intermediate) goods and services produced within India's geographical boundaries in a year.

While there were many new technicalities in the new GDP series, the main change was the change in "Base Year". Before the new series, 2011-12 was being used as the base year. This meant the goods and services produced in 2011-12 and the prices at which they were sold and bought in that year formed the basis for all future analysis.

Before 2011-12, India used 2004-05 as the base year, and before that, 1999-2000. This is the right base revision in independent India's history.

## Controversy in old GDP series

Many critics claimed that the outgoing GDP series, adopted in January 2018, overstated India's GDP growth. For instance, in the financial year 2021-26, the nominal growth of GDP is 8% and the real growth (the one after subtracting the rate of inflation) is 7.4%. Many argued that the inflation rate they faced was far more than 0.6%. In turn, this also raised questions about the quality of India's inflation data.

There was a bigger problem undermining the credibility of India's GDP data. This is called "discrepancies", an actual sub-head used by MoSPI to calculate GDP data.

## The 'discrepancies'

There are two main ways to calculate India's economic output.

One is to look at everything India produces in a year and add up all the monetary "value" created in a year. This is typically captured by a measure called the Gross Value Added (GVA). The other is to add up all the money spent by different people or entities (be it individuals, governments, business houses) in the economy. This is typically called the GDP.

The two variables are connected thus:  $GDP = GVA + \text{Net Indirect Taxes}$ , which is the tax the government levies on differ-

## CHART 1- DISCREPANCY ASA % OF GDP

Higher levels of discrepancies had undermined the credibility of GDP data based on the old series (base year 2011-12)

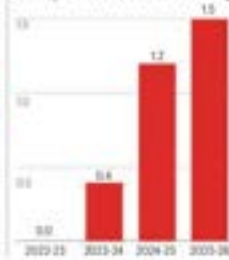


Positive Discrepancies imply that consumption was weaker than the level suggested by production estimates. Negative discrepancies suggest that consumption was stronger than what production estimated suggested.

SOURCE: MOSPI, NEW DELHI (998) 2422 3424

## CHART 2- NEW GDP SERIES

Discrepancies as a % of real GDP rising



## TABLE 1- GROWTH STORY IN RECENT YEARS

Category	FY23 (₹ Crns)	FY24 (₹ Crns)	Growth FY24 (%)	FY25 (₹ Crns)	Growth over FY 24 (%)
Real GDP	2,61,17,827	2,80,00,767	7.2	2,99,88,679	7.1
Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE)	1,49,22,828	1,57,85,257	5.8	1,66,99,891	5.8
Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF)	84,53,506	90,88,833	7.3	96,47,792	6.4
Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE)	26,90,930	29,07,652	0.6	30,95,570	6.3
Total (PFCE + GFCE + GFCF)	2,62,67,245	2,77,78,541	6.7	2,94,43,210	6.3

SOURCE: MOSPI, NEW DELHI (998) 2422 3424

ent goods minus the subsidies it provides for the production of different goods.

In theory, the two calculations should yield the same economic output.

"But, as MoSPI states in its FAQs, "often these two numbers don't match exactly. This small difference is called the 'statistical discrepancy'. It happens because some data, especially on the spending side, is not available, or reported late."

To bridge the artificial statistical gap, MoSPI has added a sort of a dummy component called "discrepancies".

It is important to note here that the production side estimates are given primacy and the "discrepancies" are added (or subtracted) from the expenditure side estimates. But high levels of "discrepancies" can undermine the credibility of data.

## Levels in the old series

Chart 1 shows the level of discrepancies

## Data challenge

Data on what India produces might be easier to capture.

But data on what India spends on is more complicated.

as a percentage of real GDP in the outgoing series of data (with base year 2011-12). Lower the levels of discrepancies, the higher the credibility of data.

Idently, says Prakash Sen, former Chief Statistician of India and former MoSPI secretary, this ratio should not exceed 2%.

## Changes in new GDP series

In India, from an accounting standpoint, there are three main sources of GDP.

- Money spent by Indians in their individual capacity. Called Private Final Consumption Expenditure, this is the biggest contributor of India's GDP, some 60% of India's total GDP comes from such spending.

- Money spent by businesses and firms towards creating new productive capacities. Think of money spent towards making new factories or buying new laptops for one's employees for office use. Called the Gross Fixed Capital Accumulation, it has

While India has just updated its GDP series, 'discrepancies' (as a percentage of real GDP) are rising again. Many factors are behind this

typically accounted for almost 30% of India's GDP in a year. This also includes the money spent by governments towards creating productive assets such as roads, etc.

- Money the government spends on its daily functioning, such as salaries, pensions, fuel, etc. This is called the Government Final Consumption Expenditure, which accounts for almost the remaining 10% of India's GDP.

There are other sub-heads too, like Net Exports, Change in Stocks, which is just the change in stock inventory, etc. And, of course, there are "discrepancies".

Table 1 lays out "real" GDP data (both level and growth rate) for 2023-24 (or FY 24).

While overall real GDP growth rate is 7.2%, the three main individual components have grown at only 5.7%. Clearly, something else is growing at a much faster rate to pull up overall real GDP growth to 7.2%.

As it turns out, the "discrepancies" have grown from zero in FY 23 to over Rs 1 lakh crore in FY 24. Change in stocks too have registered a 100% increase.

## Why this is happening

Overall real GDP has grown by 7.2% according to the new GDP series, but the three main components that account for 90% of all the real GDP have only grown by 6.7%. "Discrepancies" have grown by 210% in FY 25 over their FY 24 levels; that's almost Rs 3.3 lakh crore. Discrepancies in current FY (FY 26) are pegged at Rs 4.9 lakh crore.

While India has just updated its GDP series, discrepancies (as a percentage of real GDP) are rising again (see Chart 2).

Part of the problem is that MoSPI may not have called the data to bring down discrepancies. As he was unveiling the new GDP series, MoSPI Secretary Suresh Gang had assumed that by the time the final sets of GDP data is provided for any FY, discrepancies will be brought down to a minimum.

The other bit of the problem, points out Sen, has to do with knowing away from the Base Year, which is 2023-25. The discrepancy rate were when one looks at nominal GDP data in the new series. But the percentages start drifting up (Chart 2) when one looks at real GDP data. That's because, explains Sen, as one moves away from the base year, the quality of price information worsens. That, in turn, implies that the old problem of poor quality of deflators (the inflation rate used to arrive at real GDP) comes into picture. Gang had said that the MoSPI is now using 600-odd deflators in the new series (instead of 180 deflators) to improve the calculation of real GDP.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** The total market value of all final goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period. It represents the "expenditure side" of the economy.

- **Gross Value Added (GVA):** This measures the value of goods and services produced in an economy after deducting the cost of inputs and raw materials. It provides a sector-wise (Agriculture, Industry, Services) picture of "production."

- *Equation:*  $GDP = GVA + \text{Net Indirect Taxes (Taxes - Subsidies)}$

- **Base Year:** A benchmark year used to compare economic data across different periods. It helps in stripping away the effect of price inflation to see "real" growth.

- **Real vs. Nominal GDP:**

- **Nominal GDP:** Calculated at current market prices; it includes inflation.

- **Real GDP:** Calculated at base year prices; it reflects actual physical output.

- **Discrepancies:** The statistical gap between the GDP calculated via the production method (GVA) and the expenditure method. It acts as a "plug number" to balance the two sides of the national accounts.

- **Deflator:** An index used to convert nominal values to real values. For example, if the nominal growth is 10% and the deflator (inflation) is 4%, the real growth is roughly 6%.

- **PFCE (Private Final Consumption Expenditure):** Household spending on goods and services. It is the primary engine of the Indian economy (~60%).

- **GFCF (Gross Fixed Capital Formation):** A proxy for investment in the economy, covering infrastructure, machinery, and equipment by both the private and public sectors.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis of the current economic debate centers on the **reliability and transparency** of India's growth narrative.
- **The Mismatch:** While headline Real GDP growth remains robust (around 7% or higher), the individual components—private consumption, government spending, and investment—often show much slower growth. This suggests that the "growth" is being driven by "discrepancies" rather than actual economic activity.
- **The Primacy of Production:** In India's accounting, the production-side (GVA) data is considered more reliable. Therefore, "discrepancies" are added to the expenditure side to make it match the production side. When these discrepancies are large, it indicates that we don't actually know *who* is spending the money being produced.
- **The Deflator Problem:** Critics argue that using the wrong inflation index (like the Wholesale Price Index instead of the Consumer Price Index) to "deflate" nominal GDP leads to an overestimation of real growth.
- **Base Year Revision:** Updating the base year to 2022-23 was necessary to capture the modern structure of the economy (e.g., shifting from old manufacturing like typewriters to digital services). However, even with new data, the statistical "noise" remains high.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Independence:** Early estimates by Dadabhai Naoroji (the "Drain Theory") were the first attempts to quantify India's national income.
- **Post-1947:** The National Income Committee (1949) under P.C. Mahalanobis laid the formal foundation for data collection.
- **The "Hindu Rate of Growth" Era:** For decades, India's GDP growth stagnated around 3.5%, with base years being updated periodically (e.g., 1970-71, 1980-81).
- **2015 Revision:** India shifted its base year to 2011-12 and changed the methodology from "GDP at Factor Cost" to "GDP at Market Prices." This sparked a major political and academic row, as it suddenly showed higher growth rates during years that felt economically sluggish.
- **2026 Context:** The move to the 2022-23 base year represents the eighth such revision, aimed at capturing post-pandemic economic shifts, yet faces familiar criticisms regarding data "gaps."

### **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**

**UPSC Prelims (2015):** "With reference to the Indian economy, consider the following statements: (1) The rate of growth of Real GDP has steadily increased in the last decade. (2) The GDP at market prices (in rupees) has steadily increased in the last decade."

# Decoding India's GDP: Revisions, Realities, and the "Discrepancy" Debate

## FOUNDATIONAL CONCEPTS (The Building Blocks)



### The Core Equation

GDP represents the market value of final goods (Expenditure side), while GVA measures value added by sectors like Agriculture, Industry, and Services (Production side).

### GDP vs. GVA: The Two Sides of the Coin

GDP represents the market value of final goods (Expenditure side), while GVA measures value added by sectors like Agriculture, Industry, and Services (Production side).

### Real vs. Nominal GDP

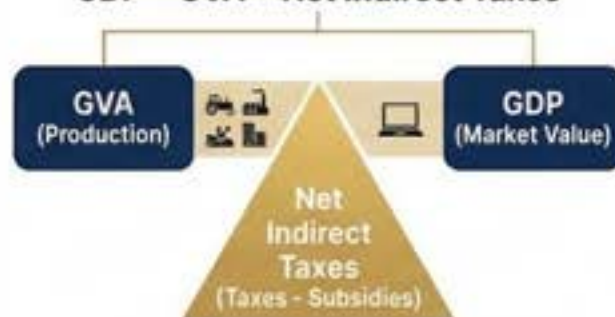
Nominal GDP uses current prices (including inflation), while Real GDP uses constant base year prices to reflect actual physical output.

### The GDP Deflator

A price index used to convert nominal values to real values, MoSPI has recently expanded the number of deflators from 180 to 600 to improve accuracy.



**The Core Equation:**  
 $GDP = GVA + \text{Net Indirect Taxes}$



### The Gap in the Narrative

Discrepancies represent the portion of the economy the government knows exists via production (GVA) but cannot track via actual spending (Expenditure).

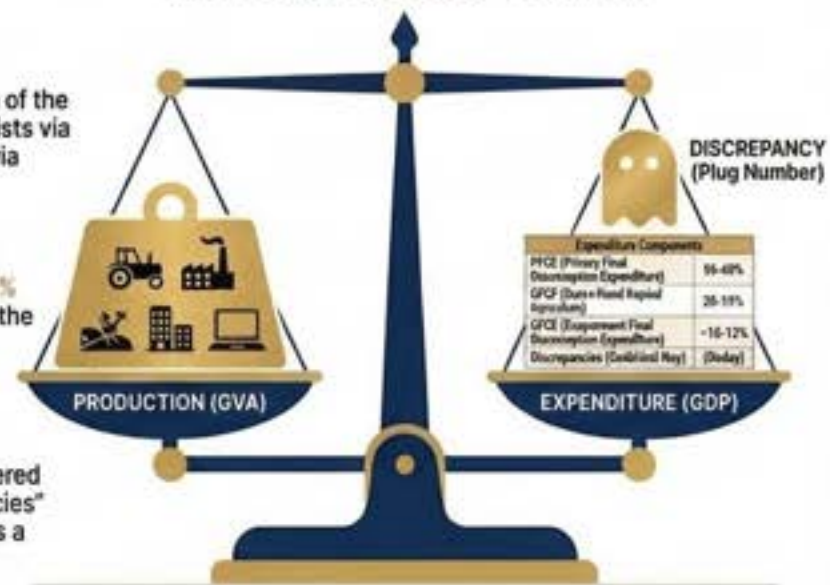
### Surging Unaccounted Growth

In FY25, discrepancies grew by 250% to nearly ₹3.5 lakh crore, pulling up the overall GDP average even when consumption was slow.

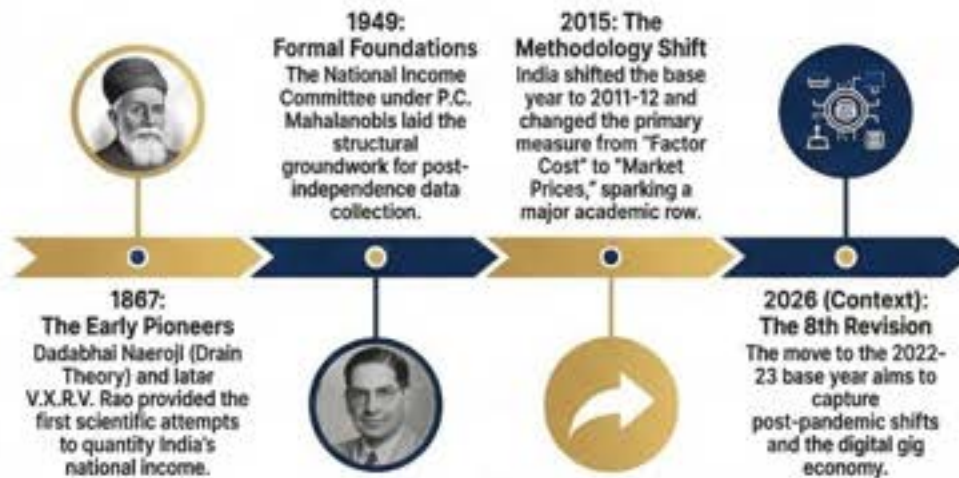
### The Primacy of Production

In India's accounting, GVA is considered more reliable; therefore, "discrepancies" are added to the expenditure side as a "plug number" to make it balance.

## THE "DISCREPANCY" PUZZLE



## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF GDP REVISIONS



## MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHALLENGES & WAY FORWARD

### MULTIDIMENSIONAL CHALLENGES

**The "Informal" Wall**  
40-50% of India's GDP is informal; capturing this expenditure is nearly impossible through standard corporate balance sheets.

**K-Shaped Recovery & Social Impact**  
K Real GDP grows at 7% but Private Consumption (PFCE) grows at only 3-4%, it points to rising inequality and social distress.

**Policy Miscalibration**  
If the RBI relies on potentially overstated growth figures, it may keep interest rates too high, inadvertently hurting the actual economy.

### WAY FORWARD: STRENGTHENING THE SYSTEM

**Statutory Backing for NSC**  
Give the National Statistical Commission (NSC) independent legal status to ensure total autonomy from the executive.

**Annual Consumption Surveys**  
Move from 5-year (quinquennial) to annual household surveys to minimize guesswork on the expenditure side.

**Modernize with "Digital Exhaust"**  
Use real-time digital footprints like UPI, GSTN, and e-way bills as primary data sources rather than just supplements.

{ PAUL EHRLICH • 1993-2026 }

# The author who 'detonated' *The Population Bomb*

Keith Schneider  
March 16

PAUL R Ehrlich, an eminent ecologist and population scientist whose bestselling book, "The Population Bomb," was celebrated as a prescient warning of a coming age of food shortages and famine but later criticized by academic rivals for what they called its sky-is-falling rhetoric, died on Friday in Palo Alto, California. He was 93.

His death, at a nursing facility in the retirement community where he lived, was caused by complications of cancer, his daughter, Lisa Marie Daniel, said. As a young professor of biology at Stanford University in

the mid-1960s, Ehrlich was known for his absorbing lectures on evolution, in which he described what plants and animals faced on a planet stressed by industrial pollution and population growth. He distilled those lectures into an article published in December 1967 in *New Scientist* magazine.

Six months later, encouraged by David Brower, the executive director of the environmental group Sierra Club, to write a book on the subject, Ehrlich published "The Population Bomb." He asserted that the planet's condition began to deteriorate rapidly in the 1950s, when the rate of population growth exceeded the increase in food pro-



Paul R Ehrlich dies in California

duction. He called on couples to limit their families to one or two children. Witty, knowledgeable and not at all reticent, Ehrlich gained a huge audience on television, especially on "The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson". His forecast of food riots in the US and of imminent glo-

bal famines caused by escalating population growth found a worldwide readership.

"The Population Bomb" sold 3 million copies and transformed Ehrlich into one of the environmental movement's most recognized leaders. His influence motivated governments to convene conferences on controlling population. Ehrlich expanded on his thesis in "The End of Affluence" (1974), which he wrote with his wife, Anne H. Ehrlich, who wrote or edited 15 books with him. The book forecast a "nutritional disaster", predicting that "before 1985, mankind will enter a genuine age of scarcity."

Such predictions prompted

rivals to question his claims. In 1980, Julian Simon, an economist at the University of Maryland, challenged Ehrlich and two of his colleagues with what Stewart Brand, a founder of the Whole Earth Catalog, called "one of the great revelatory bets."

Convinced that the growing population would make natural resources more scarce and drive up costs, Ehrlich accepted Simon's challenge, betting that the prices of five key metals would rise in the 1980s. In 1990, Ehrlich and his colleagues conceded defeat and sent Simon a check for \$576.07 — an amount that represented the decline in the metals' prices after accounting for inflation. **NYT**

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Malthusian Trap:** Named after Thomas Malthus, it refers to the theory that population growth will outpace food production, leading to inevitable famine or war.
- **The Population Bomb:** A metaphor for rapid, exponential population growth that threatens to "explode" and destroy social and environmental stability.
- **Resource Scarcity:** A situation where the demand for a resource exceeds its supply, often leading to price hikes or social unrest.
- **Simon-Ehrlich Wager:** A famous 1980 bet between Paul Ehrlich (biologist) and Julian Simon (economist) over whether the prices of five metals would rise or fall over a decade.
- **Cornucopianism:** The belief that advances in technology and human ingenuity can provide unlimited resources, countering Malthusian fears.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The discourse surrounding Ehrlich's work presents a clash between **Biological Limits** and **Economic Adaptability**:
  - **The Core Thesis:** Rapid population growth (exceeding food production) leads to ecological collapse, "nutritional disasters," and global instability.
  - **Supporting Evidence:** In the 1960s, localized famines and visible industrial pollution provided a visceral backdrop for these warnings.
  - **The Counterargument:** Critics (like Julian Simon) argued that human innovation and market mechanisms (price signals) drive the discovery of substitutes and more efficient production, preventing scarcity.
  - **The Outcome:** The failure of Ehrlich's specific predictions (the 1980s metal price decline) highlighted the unpredictable role of technology and market dynamics in resource management.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **1798:** Thomas Malthus publishes *An Essay on the Principle of Population*, setting the stage for demographic alarmism.
- **1950s-60s:** Post-WWII "Baby Boom" and falling mortality rates lead to a global population surge.
- **1968:** Publication of *The Population Bomb* catalyzes the modern environmental movement.
- **1970s:** The Green Revolution in India and elsewhere significantly boosts food yields, delaying the predicted famines.
- **1980-1990:** The Simon-Ehrlich wager concludes with a win for the economists, as metal prices dropped despite population growth.
- **Present Day:** The focus has shifted from "overpopulation" to "overconsumption" and the "Anthropocene," focusing on climate change rather than just food quantity.

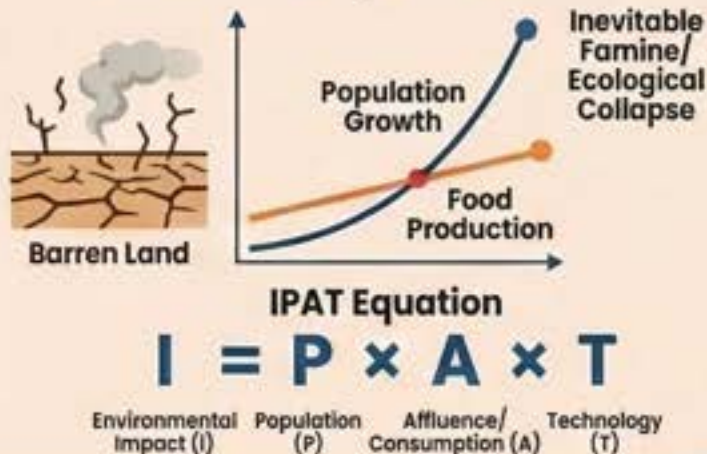
- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**

- **UPSC Mains (2020):** "Critical examine whether growing population is the cause of poverty or poverty is the main cause of population increase in India."
- **UPSC Mains (2019):** "Empowering women is the key to control population growth. Discuss."
- **UPSC Mains (2013):** "Discuss the various economic and socio-cultural forces that are driving increasing urbanization in India."
- **Prelims (Multiple Years):** Questions on Total Fertility Rate (TFR), Demographic Dividend, and Malthusian Theory.

# The Great Population Debate: Scarcity vs. Ingenuity

## (A UPSC Essential)

### Malthusian Trap & Neo-Malthusianism



**Ehrlich**  
(The Biologist)



**Simon**  
(The Economist)

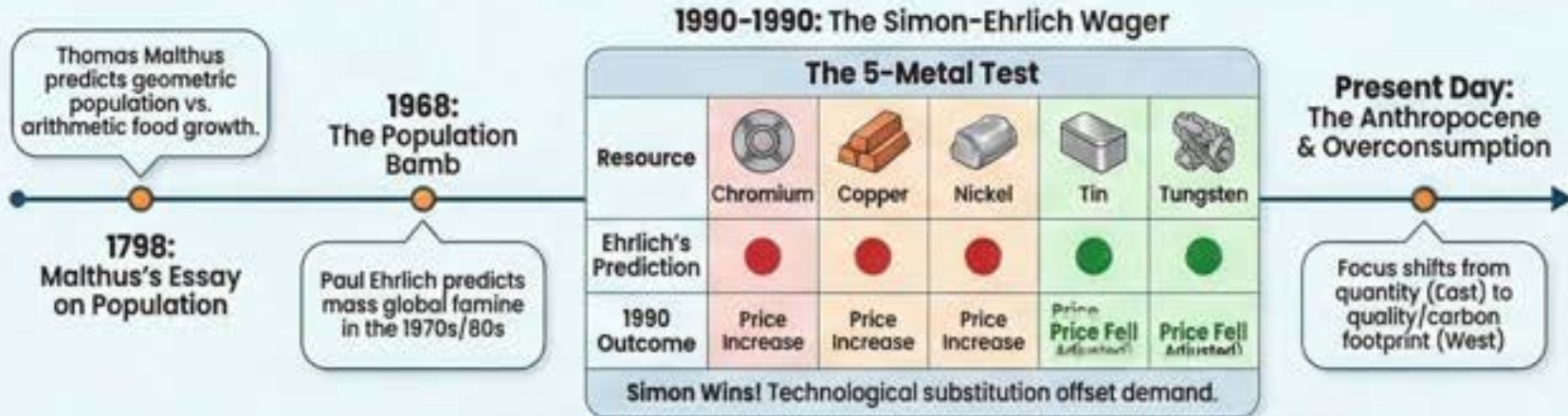


### Tug-of-War

### Cornucopianism & Techno-Optimism



### The Historical Evolution (1798 - Present)



### The Way Forward: Empowerment over Coercion





# AXIA

## IAS ACADEMY

RISE ABOVE THE REST

**UPSC CSE CLASSES - PRELIMS + MAINS + INTERVIEW GUIDANCE**

- **EXPERT FACULTY & MENTORSHIP**
- **COMPREHENSIVE STUDY MATERIAL**
- **REGULAR TEST SERIES & EVALUATION**
- **CURRENT AFFAIRS & ANSWER WRITING FOCUS**
- **SMALL BATCH SIZES FOR PERSONAL ATTENTION**

**[axiaiasacademy.com](http://axiaiasacademy.com)**

**+91 6002-417488**