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India important to U.S. Indo-Pacific policy: Rubio

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

India plays an important role in the U.S. Indo-Pacific policy, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who met and invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Washington later this year, said on Saturday.

Mr. Rubio, who began his four-day trip to India on Saturday morning, will hold bilateral talks with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Sunday and attend the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM) along with Ministers from Australia and Japan on Tuesday. One of his missions in India was to "renew" the Quad engagement, Mr. Rubio said, crediting Mr. Modi and U.S. President Donald Trump as drivers of the India-U.S. engagement.

"Secretary Rubio briefed PM Modi on the sustained progress in bilateral cooperation across a wide range of sectors, including defence, strategic technologies, trade and investment, energy security, connectivity, education and people-to-people ties," a statement by the Press Information Bureau said.

The two leaders are expected to meet in June when they travel to Evian in France for the G7 summit, where India is one of the countries invited to an outreach summit.

In addition, Mr. Modi, who has visited the Trump White House once already in February 2025, is expected to travel to the U.S. for the G20 summit in Mar-a-Lago in December this year.

U.S. State Department spokesperson Tommy Pigott added that Mr. Rubio had extended an invitation, on behalf of Mr. Trump, to the Prime Minister to visit the White House and had discussed the conflict with Iran.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio during a meeting, in New Delhi, on Saturday. (PIB)

"The Secretary emphasized that the U.S. will not let Iran hold the global energy market hostage and affirmed that U.S. energy products have the potential to diversify India's energy supply," he said.

The PIB statement said Mr. Modi had stated India's "consistent support for peace efforts" and "reiterated the call for peaceful resolution of the conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy".

Quad meet

This is the third time the Quad Foreign Ministers will meet since Mr. Trump returned to power, as they met in January and July 2025.

However, they have not so far been able to schedule a date for the Quad Summit, due to be held in India for the past two years, partly due to the strain in ties between both countries over American tariffs, sanctions, and visa restrictions, as well as Washington's claims of having mediated the India-Pakistan ceasefire in 2025, which New Delhi has denied.

"My very first meeting officially as Secretary of State was a meeting of the Quad. We are going to renew that," Mr. Rubio said, speaking at an event at the

U.S. Embassy's premises to inaugurate a new 'Support Annex Building'. The Quad FMM in India was important "as a tangible sign of what an important role India plays for the United States and [its] posture and approach to the Indo-Pacific", he said.

The Support Annex building will contain several consular and visa section offices, Mr. Rubio said, announcing that the U.S. would shortly begin a priority visa service for Indians travelling to the United States for business and investment.

The timing of the event, however, coincided with new U.S. restrictions on H1B visas and regulations, mandating Permanent Resident Card applicants leave the U.S. and complete their applications in their home countries, which would mean considerable dislocation for Indian professionals.

On Saturday evening, Mr. Rubio attended a reception in his honour hosted by Mr. Gor, where External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Foreign Secretary Vikram Mirri as well as Delhi Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu were present.

RELATED REPORT ON
PAGE 5

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **The Indo-Pacific Region:** An integrated biogeographic theater spanning from the eastern coast of Africa, across the Indian Ocean, to the western and central Pacific Ocean. Conceptually, it shifts global focus away from a Eurocentric paradigm toward an Asia-centric maritime framework, acknowledging that global commerce and security depend on open sea lanes here.
- **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad):** A diplomatic and strategic plurilateral grouping comprising India, the United States, Japan, and Australia. Its primary objective is to maintain a "free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific." Rather than operating as a formal military alliance, it serves as a functional framework for maritime security, disaster relief, critical technologies, and supply chain resilience.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** A cornerstone of Indian foreign policy denoting an independent decision-making stance. It implies that a state's alignment with external powers is issue-based rather than systemic or institutionalized. This allows India to collaborate deeply with Western partners on maritime security while maintaining distinct ties with states like Russia or Iran.
- **Tariff-Sanctions-Visa Nexus:** The structural interdependence where economic tools (tariffs), legal instruments of coercion (sanctions like CAATSA), and immigration mechanics (H1-B caps) are leveraged simultaneously during bilateral negotiations to gain concessions in unrelated strategic or security domains.
- **Energy Diversification and Security:** The policy of mitigating vulnerability to geopolitical supply shocks by spreading a country's oil and gas procurement across varied geographic regions and fuel types. For an import-dependent economy like India, this involves shifting from volatile regional sources toward stable, alternative suppliers.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The contemporary relationship between India and the United States reflects a complex balance of strategic convergence and deep-seated structural friction.

- **The Central Thesis**

- The strategic partnership between India and the United States has achieved deep institutional grounding, driven primarily by shared anxieties over regional stability in the Indo-Pacific. However, this convergence is persistently challenged by traditional frictions in trade protectionism, divergent zero-sum immigration policies, and conflicting priorities regarding West Asian states like Iran.

- **Key Supporting Arguments**

- **Minilateralism as a Stabilizing Core:** Groupings like the Quad function as institutional buffers. Even when direct bilateral negotiations stall due to domestic political calculations or trade spats, minilateral forums keep communication open across defence, technology, and health security.
- **The Energy Security Contradiction:** Washington frequently attempts to enforce secondary sanctions to squeeze specific energy producers like Iran out of global markets. To offset the resulting supply strains, the U.S. markets its own domestic energy products as alternative options. India, however, prioritizes a balanced approach, seeking low-cost imports alongside diplomatic stability.
- **The Immigration Dichotomy:** While both nations emphasize high-technology cooperation through frameworks like the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET), domestic political constraints often prompt the U.S. to tighten H1-B rules or enforce restrictive visa tracks. This creates a paradox where states seek integrated tech sectors but restrict the movement of the engineers who build them.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- The strategic trajectory of India-U.S. relations has evolved from distant Cold War dynamics to an extensive modern partnership.
- **From Estrangement to Strategic Convergence**
- During the Cold War, the relationship was marked by mutual distrust. India's choice of non-alignment, alongside its close defense ties with the Soviet Union, clashed with Washington's regional military alignments. This friction peaked during the 1971 geopolitical crisis, leaving a legacy of institutional caution in New Delhi.
- **The Institutional Turn**
- The post-Cold War era brought a fundamental shift driven by India's economic reforms and a shared focus on a shifting Asian balance of power. Landmark milestones like the 2008 Civil Nuclear Agreement (123 Agreement) effectively ended India's nuclear isolation without requiring it to sign the NPT. This paved the way for modern defense cooperation, leading to India's designation as a *Major Defense Partner* and the signing of foundational pacts:
- **LEMOA (2016):** Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement — Allows mutual access to military bases for refueling and replenishment.
- **COMCASA (2018):** Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement — Facilitates the transfer of encrypted communication equipment for real-time data sharing.
- **BECA (2020):** Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement — Enables the sharing of high-accuracy geospatial data and satellite imagery.
- **Way Forward**
- To ensure the long-term stability and growth of the partnership, both nations should focus on practical, institutionalized steps forward.
- **Institutionalizing Trade Frameworks**
- Both nations would benefit from moving past ad-hoc, transactional tariff negotiations toward a more structured, predictable bilateral trade dialogue. Establishing a dedicated mechanism to resolve market-access disputes can help shield long-term technology and supply-chain initiatives from short-term commercial disagreements.
- **Creating Predictable Immigration Corridors**
- To sustain close cooperation in high-technology fields, it is important to decouple specialized professional mobility from broader immigration debates. Establishing predictable, streamlined processing windows for researchers, engineers, and investors can prevent sudden policy shifts from disrupting joint projects in critical sectors like artificial intelligence and quantum computing.
- **Constructive Dialogue on Secondary Sanctions**
- Instead of relying on unilateral enforcement mechanisms that create compliance challenges for partners, Washington and New Delhi should utilize structured consultation channels. This allows both sides to anticipate and manage the impact of sanctions on critical sectors like energy and defense procurement, protecting India's strategic autonomy while respecting shared security goals.

1 GEOPOLITICAL THEATER: THE INDO-PACIFIC



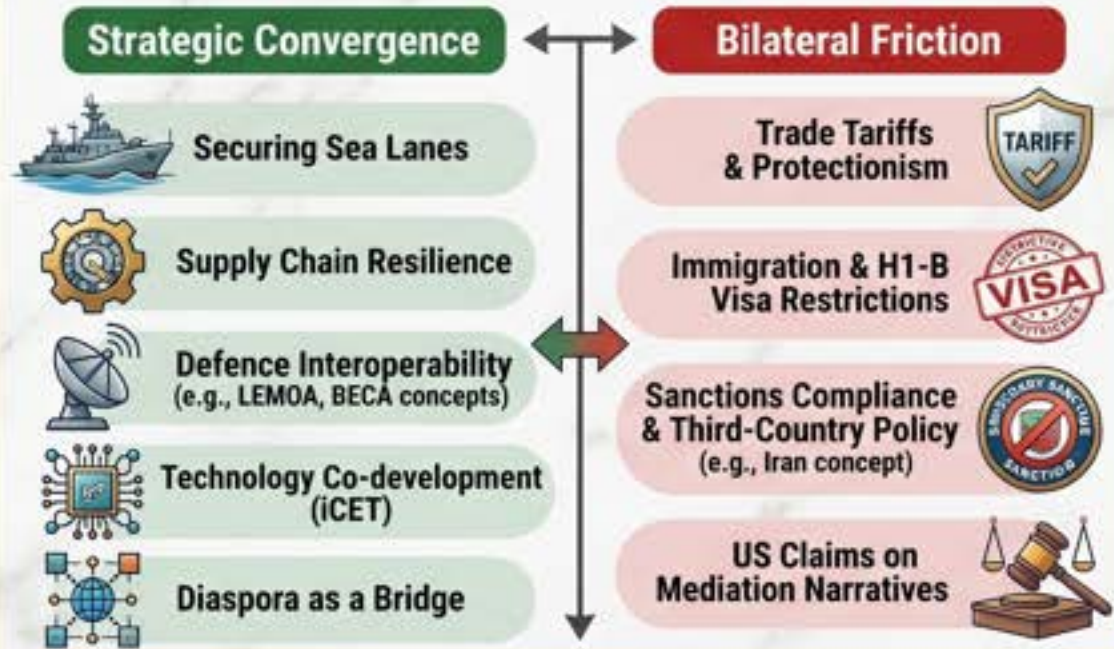
2 MINILATERAL COOPERATION: THE QUAD



4 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION: A STRATEGIC TRAJECTORY



3 AXIA ANALYSIS: STRATEGIC CONVERGENCE VS. BILATERAL FRICTION



5 MULTIDIMENSIONAL AXIS



6 WAY FORWARD: PRACTICAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- STRATEGIC DIALOGUE 2.0 (Institutionalized trade resolution, deep tech integration)
- PREDICTABLE VISA PATHS (Streamlined targeted migration protocols, decoupled from politics)
- DEFENCE TECHNOLOGY TRANSFERS (Streamlined ITAR, joint development)
- SUSTAINABLE SUPPLY CHAINS (Critical mineral cooperation, resilient logistics)



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AXIA ANALYTICA

'India, Nordic countries are on the same page on peace'

While India has a different relationship with Russia, it does not mean that Nordic nations cannot engage on other points, says Iceland's Prime Minister; the biggest growth areas in a partnership between India and Iceland will be in renewable energy, cultural cooperation and people-to-people ties, she adds, making a pitch for film crews to consider her country's landscape as a backdrop for new projects

INTERVIEW

Kristrún Mjöll Frostadóttir

Suhasini Haidar
OSLO

India and the Nordic countries have a new engagement, driven in part by a desire for middle powers to find common ground in the face of concerns about global powers. However, there are clear differences on ties with Russia, says Iceland's Prime Minister Kristrún Mjöll Frostadóttir. Speaking to *The Hindu* on the sidelines of the recent India-Nordic Summit in Oslo, Ms. Frostadóttir, who, at 38, is one of the world's

youngest leaders, and an economist by training, said she hopes to discuss new areas to improve bilateral trade, which is currently at extremely low levels, through a focus on renewable energy technologies. She also pitched for more Indian films to be shot against Icelandic backdrops.

Is the emergence of the relationship between India and Nordic countries driven by concerns that the three big powers right now are seen as breaking the international rule of law?

The relationship between the Nordics and India has a longer history than maybe what we've been seeing ov-

er the course of the last couple of years, so I don't want to tie it directly to that, but I think, in general, a lot of countries are looking outward... Things are shifting, new deals are being done. You see this with the EU as well, you see it with Canada, and you see it now with India.

The most important message out of the [India-Nordic] summit is, there's hope for international relations. There are still large democratic countries like India that are opening up instead of closing off, and this is what the world needs to hear.

Even so, there's a basic difference between Nordic countries and India, over ties with Russia...



I won't deny that India has a different relationship with Russia than the Nordics do. I do know, however, that Prime Minister Modi wants this war to end, and I think we're all on that page. We believe Ukraine needs to win this war. For small Nordic countries,

this is important, that you know people respect the rule of law, they respect borders, that we don't set up double standards. We had the issue with Greenland [and the U.S.], and we want to ensure that we don't set a precedent in that regard. That doesn't

mean that we can't interact at other levels, but we've sent out clear messages on our stand on Ukraine.

India and Iceland trade relations are nascent, just about \$30-40 million... Where do you see the biggest growth areas? And do you plan a visit to India?

I would love to go to India. I think that's definitely something that we're looking into. We should work with what we already have. We have a great relationship when it comes to renewables. There's so much growth potential for India there with its goal of 500 gigawatts renewable energy. We also have potential in cultural ties, and [PM Modi and I] discussed the

Indian film industry. We have had outside film crews coming in and using Icelandic territory as backdrop. I think that would be a very interesting cooperation that we could have.

Also, we have many people, including Indians, coming to Iceland with their skills, becoming a part of the community in a very positive way. So there's also development opportunities there.

On that issue, when we speak to the Indian community their worry is that they are no longer welcome the way they used to be. What is the future of immigration to Europe?

I understand that [concern]. I think there's been a

big shift in attitudes to migration, especially when it comes to, I mean, I can only speak from my part of the world, where we've maybe been pushed into a setting where we're focusing too much on low-skilled, low-value immigration. I don't see that as an issue when it comes to Indian migration.

These are usually people coming in with high levels of education, going into productive jobs, so it's also a matter of how you frame it, but this is a responsibility of the government as well.

The full interview is at [newshive.is/iceland](https://www.newshive.is/iceland) (The reporter was in Oslo at the invitation of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to cover the India-Nordic Summit)

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Middle Powers:** Nations that possess significant diplomatic, economic, or regional influence but are not global superpowers. They lack the capacity to dictate global terms single-handedly, yet they play a critical role in maintaining systemic stability.
- **Rule-Based International Order:** A framework of international relations governed by transparent, shared laws, treaties, and global bodies (like the UN) rather than raw military or economic coercion.
- **Minilateralism:** A diplomatic strategy that favors small, targeted groups of countries coming together to solve specific issues, contrasting with the slower, broader processes of large multilateral institutions like the United Nations.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** A foreign policy posture wherein a state keeps its decision-making independent, avoiding binding military alliances that dictate its actions on the world stage.
- **Double Standards in Geopolitics:** A situation where similar geopolitical actions are judged differently depending on who performs them, exposing the underlying friction between ethical rhetoric and national self-interest.
- **High-Skilled Migration Pathways:** Immigration policies designed specifically to attract globally competitive talent, such as engineers, data scientists, and researchers, distinguishing them from low-skilled, low-wage labor flows.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**


- The contemporary engagement between India and the Nordic countries reveals a multi-layered diplomatic dynamic. While shared structural anxieties bring them closer, historical ties and differing regional security priorities introduce clear friction points.
- **The Search for Structural Balance**
 - A primary driver behind this evolving relationship is the collective anxiety among middle and rising powers over the volatility of global superpowers. As dominant global actors increasingly bypass or strain international institutions, middle powers feel a strong incentive to seek out new, reliable partnerships. By diversifying their diplomatic networks, both India and the Nordic states create a buffer against the unpredictability of a purely polarized world order.
- **Open Democratic Architecture**
 - Amid a global trend toward economic protectionism and inward-looking national policies, the expanding cooperation between India and Northern Europe offers a counter-narrative. The willingness of a massive developing democracy like India to open up its market and engage with highly advanced, export-driven economies suggests a mutual belief in collaborative growth. This shared openness forms the bedrock of their diplomatic engagement.
- **The Russian Divergence and Small-State Anxieties**
 - A major point of divergence stems from their respective geographical realities and historical security experiences. For the Nordic nations—especially small states like Iceland—absolute adherence to state sovereignty and territorial integrity is an existential necessity. They view any violation of international borders as a dangerous precedent that directly threatens their security.
 - Consequently, they advocate for clear, uncompromising stances on European security. India, by contrast, operates under a philosophy of strategic autonomy. New Delhi prioritizes its long-standing defense and energy ties with Moscow, favoring quiet diplomacy and dialogues focused on cessation of hostilities rather than outright public condemnation.
- **Complementarity in Clean Energy and Cultural Capital**
 - Away from hard security, the core thesis of their bilateral relationship relies on practical economic synergy. India has set an ambitious target of achieving 500 gigawatts of non-fossil fuel energy capacity. The Nordic region possesses some of the world's most advanced technologies in geothermal energy, wind power, and green hydrogen.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- The relationship between India and the Nordic nations has transformed from distant, formal interactions during the Cold War into a targeted, modern partnership focused on green technology.
- **The Cold War Era (1947–1991)**
- Following independence, India's foreign policy was anchored in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), which sought to navigate global politics without joining Western or Soviet blocs. The Nordic states, though distinct in their individual arrangements (e.g., Norway and Denmark joined NATO, while Sweden and Finland maintained strict neutrality), generally remained aligned with Western security frameworks.
- During this time, interactions were largely polite and centered on development assistance or basic commercial agreements. Diplomatic engagement lacked the deep strategic urgency seen in India's relations with global superpowers.
- **Post-Liberalization Integration (1991–2014)**
- The opening of the Indian economy in 1991 marked a significant turning point. As India transformed into a global technology and services hub, Nordic countries began to view New Delhi less as a recipient of development aid and more as a viable economic partner.
- Bilateral trade began to expand beyond traditional commodities into software services, pharmaceuticals, and high-end manufacturing. However, these engagements remained largely fragmented, handled through individual bilateral channels rather than a unified regional approach.
- **The Era of Institutionalized Minilateralism (2018–Present)**
- The launch of the first India-Nordic Summit in Stockholm in 2018 marked a major structural shift. This move signaled India's intent to engage with the Nordic region as a collective, high-tech economic bloc.
- By the time of the second summit in Copenhagen in 2022 and subsequent high-level meetings, the focus had shifted toward building green strategic partnerships. The relationship evolved from general diplomatic goodwill into a targeted alliance centered on climate action, sustainable urban development, and managing the blue economy.





- **Way Forward**

- To unlock the full potential of the India-Nordic relationship, both sides need to move from high-level diplomatic agreements to practical, targeted policy actions.
 - **Swiftly Implement Trade Agreements:** Both sides should prioritize executing the Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) with the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Finalizing this agreement will help lower non-tariff barriers, simplify customs procedures, and provide a clear legal framework to boost bilateral investments well beyond current levels.
 - **Establish Joint Green Technology Centers:** India and the Nordic nations should set up dedicated research and development hubs focused on scaling specific clean energy technologies. Combining Nordic innovations in green hydrogen and geothermal energy with Indian manufacturing capacity can help lower production costs and speed up deployment across India.
 - **Formalize Talent Mobility Agreements:** To ensure the smooth movement of professionals, governments should sign targeted migration and mobility partnerships. These frameworks should streamline visa paths for highly skilled Indian professionals, providing clarity for tech firms while addressing domestic immigration considerations in Europe.
 - **Expand Cooperation in the Arctic:** Building on India's role as an Observer to the Arctic Council, the nations should expand joint scientific research into Arctic climate changes. Since changes in polar ice patterns directly affect the Indian monsoon system, deep scientific collaboration in this area serves mutual ecological and economic interests.
- 



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GEOPOLITICAL ALIGNMENT & DRIVERS

Strategic Autonomy & Middle Power Cooperation

1. Search for common ground in multipolar world.
2. Mitigation of unilateral power concerns.
3. Opening large democracies to balanced growth.



DIVERGENT VIEWS: RUSSIA

Strategic Differences vs. Common Goal

1. India prioritizes cessation of war via dialogue and non-alignment.
2. Nordics emphasize rule of law, border respect, and Ukraine's win.
3. Prevent double standards and precedents for small states.
3. Norvent medihasize to a-mrals.



ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP & SUSTAINABILITY

Growth Potential in Clean Tech

1. Trade at low levels (Iceland: \$30-40M) but high scaling potential.
2. Renewable Energy Tech (Geothermal, Green Hydrogen) for India's 500 GW goal.
3. Sustainable growth paths.



CULTURAL TIES: CINEMA & PEOPLE

Film Industry and Diaspora Contributions

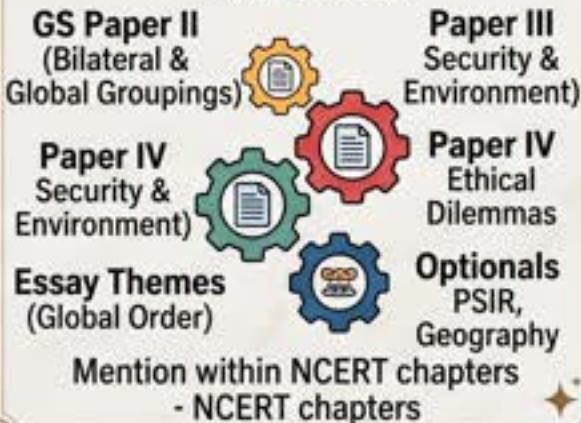
1. Films shot on unique Icelandic backdrops.
2. Cultural diplomacy through shared visual arts.
3. High-skilled Indian diaspora as community assets.



MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS



UPSC CSE SYLLABUS MAPPING



WAY FORWARD: A SUSTAINABLE PATH



MODEL QUESTION & SUMMARY

- Question:** Critically evaluate the evolving significance of India-Nordic relations, balancing common global goals and strategic divergences.
- Why Relevant?** Middle power rebalancing, energy transition, diplomatic ethics.



Nations capable of producing weapons can shape their own future, says Rajnath Singh

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said that countries capable of producing their own weapons shaped their own future, as he inaugurated NIBE Group's Defence Manufacturing Complex in Shirdi, Maharashtra, in the presence of Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

The newly inaugurated complex will manufacture advanced artillery systems, missile and space technologies, rocket systems, energetic materials, and autonomous defence platforms, strengthening India's push towards self-reliance in defence



Ambitious project: Rajnath Singh, Devendra Fadnavis, CDS General Anil Chauhan and others at the Defence Manufacturing Complex of Nibe Group in Shirdi, Ahilyanagar, on Saturday. ANI

production.

According to the Ministry, a major highlight of the event was the flagging off of India's first 300-km Universal Rocket Launching System, Suryastra. The

foundation stone for a dedicated missile complex for the system was also laid. Indigenous TNT Plant Technology, RDX Plant Technology, and a Renewable Bio-Energy Com-

pressed Biogas Plant were unveiled during the ceremony. NIBE Group also exchanged an MoU with Black Sky for cooperation in satellite assembly.

Mr. Singh said future

wars would increasingly be determined by advancements in munitions, automation, and emerging technologies rather than merely the size of armed forces. Referring to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, developments in West Asia, and India's Operation Sindoor, he said modern warfare has underlined the strategic importance of indigenous technological capabilities.

Mr. Singh emphasised that India's private sector has evolved from being a minor contributor to becoming a key innovator in defence manufacturing. He also noted that private sector participation in defence production has now reached nearly 25-30%.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Universal Rocket Launching System (URLS):** A modular, multi-calibre launching platform designed to deploy various rocket configurations from a single system. For instance, platforms capable of supporting both tactical 150-km variants and deep-strike 300-km variants give commanders high operational flexibility while significantly reducing the logistical tail on the battlefield.
- **Circular Error Probable (CEP):** A standard military metric used to evaluate the precision and targeting accuracy of missile and rocket systems. It defines the radius of a circle within which 50% of fired rounds are expected to land. Achieving a CEP of under 2 meters at a 300-km range indicates exceptional precision, allowing forces to neutralize high-value targets while minimizing collateral damage.
- **Energetic Materials:** High-energy chemical compounds, such as specialized formulations of RDX (Research Department Explosive) and TNT (Trinitrotoluene), that serve as propellants, explosives, or pyrotechnics in military applications. Localizing the production technologies for these materials is critical for maintaining ammunition supply chains during protracted conventional conflicts.
- **Autonomous Defence Platforms:** Unmanned hardware systems integrated with artificial intelligence, robotics, and automated control networks that execute surveillance, logistical, or combat missions without direct human intervention. Examples include unmanned ground vehicles (UGVs) or autonomous loitering munitions used to navigate high-threat combat zones.
- **Strategic Partnership Model (SPM):** A defense procurement framework intended to institutionalize long-term collaborations between global Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) and domestic private defense entities. This structural mechanism aims to facilitate technology transfers and manufacture cutting-edge military platforms within India.

- **2. Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- **Weapon Production as Sovereign Destiny:** The core thesis states that absolute geopolitical autonomy is tied to independent military manufacturing capabilities. In a global landscape marked by supply chain disruptions and the weaponization of critical minerals, relying on foreign defense imports introduces strategic vulnerabilities during active security crises.
- **The Shift from Mass to Technology:** Modern warfare paradigms are shifting from the absolute numerical size of standing armed forces to advanced capabilities in munitions precision, automation, and emerging technologies. Lessons from recent Eurasian and Middle Eastern conflicts show that smaller, technologically advanced forces can effectively counter massive conventional militaries.
- **The Transformation of Private Sector Participation:** Private enterprise has evolved from a basic supplier of components ("nuts and bolts") into a leading innovator of state-of-the-art weapons systems. Private sector participation in defense production has reached nearly 25-30%, with long-term policy targets aiming to raise this ecosystem share to 50%.
- **Dual-Use Industrial Frameworks:** Modern defense industrial complexes are increasingly integrating clean energy initiatives, such as renewable Bio-CNG plants, into their manufacturing sites. This dual focus supports local agricultural economies through biomass processing while building eco-industrial defense zones that align security infrastructure with national sustainability goals.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **The Era of Complete Import Dependence (1947–1960s):** Post-independence, India relied heavily on legacy British and European military hardware. The strategic shocks of early regional conflicts highlighted the vulnerability of lacking a domestic defense industrial base, prompting initial steps toward state-led manufacturing.

- **The State-Led Monopolization Phase (1970s–1990s):** The state established defense production through a centralized network of Ordnance Factories and Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs). While this framework successfully built baseline industrial capacities, bureaucratic monopolies often led to technological lags, prolonged development cycles, and high reliance on licensed foreign blueprints.

- **The Introduction of Liberalization and Joint Ventures (2000s–2010s):** Opening the defense sector to partial Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and establishing successive versions of the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) marked the initial entry of private capital. Successful joint ventures, such as the BrahMos cruise missile program, demonstrated the viability of collaborative strategic manufacturing.

- **The Indigenization and Private Innovation Push (2014–Present):** The launch of targeted initiatives like "Aatmanirbhar Bharat", Positive Indigenisation Lists, and the Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX) framework transformed the private sector into a key defense partner. The successful development and testing of advanced precision long-range systems by domestic firms marks a major milestone in this evolutionary timeline.

- **Way Forward**

- **Streamlining Trial and Procurement Timelines:** The Ministry of Defence should establish fast-tracked, transparent testing and evaluation pipelines specifically tailored for private sector innovations. This minimizes the time between a successful technological demonstration and full field deployment.

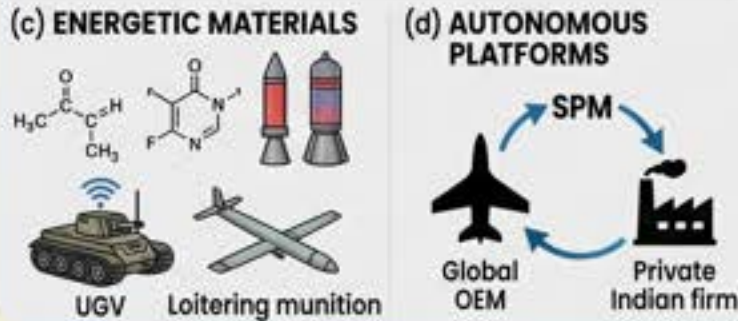
- **Establishing Dedicated Defence Venture Funds:** To address high capital risks, the state should expand public-private venture funds. Providing long-term, patient capital to defense startups and MSMEs will help sustain complex, multi-year R&D cycles.

- **Strengthening Tiered Cyber-Security Architectures:** Implementing rigorous, mandatory cybersecurity protocols across all private defense contractors is essential. Creating unified defense-industrial security operation centers will protect sensitive blueprints and proprietary defense software from espionage.

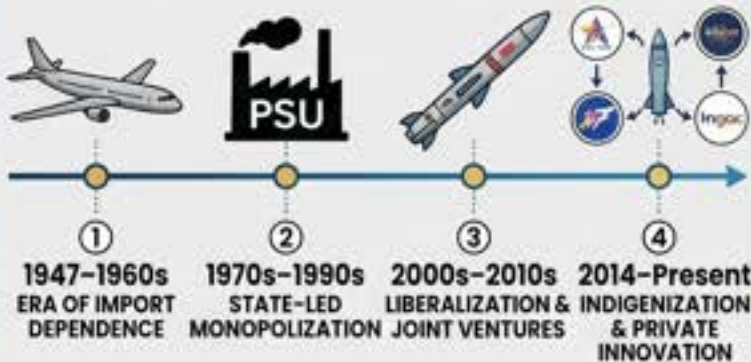
- **Deepening Academia-Industry Integration:** Expanding partnerships between elite technical institutions, defense public labs (such as DRDO), and private manufacturing complexes will create tailored educational programs in autonomous systems, rocketry, and precision metallurgy, ensuring a steady pipeline of specialized talent.



KEY TERMS EXPLAINED

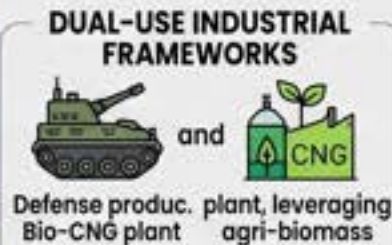
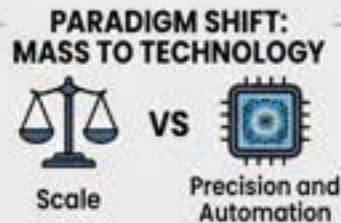


HISTORICAL EVOLUTION (4 PHASES)



**Comprehensive Analysis for UPSC CSE:
STRATEGIC INDIGENIZATION OF DEFENCE PRODUCTION.**

STRATEGIC AUTONOMY: THE COEXISTENCE OF SOVEREIGNTY & SELF-RELIANCE



MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS



SUSTAINABILITY & CHALLENGES



UPSC CSE SYLLABUS LINKAGES



THE WAY FORWARD

- Fast-tracked trials
- Venture Funds
- Cyber Protocols
- Academia-Industry integration

WHA marks stroke as public health priority for the first time

Ramya Kannan

The World Health Assembly (WHA) passed the first-ever resolution on strokes on Friday, urging member states to recognise the medical condition as a public health priority and to strengthen national policies across the full care pathway. This involves prevention and risk-factor control, timely acute treatment, expanded rehabilitation, and long-term support.

The WHO definition of stroke is a medical emergency that occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted, either due to a blockage or bleeding. This lack of blood flow can lead to brain cell death and serious complications. Strokes can be fatal and need immediate treat-

ment. It is estimated that strokes affect 12 million people every year, killing over half of them, and leaving two out of three survivors with a lasting disability.

The resolution calls for stronger national and global action to reduce the burden of strokes, through prevention, acute care, rehabilitation, and improved health system readiness. It also reinforces reporting accountability.

Kouamivi Agboyibor, WHO's medical officer for cardiovascular diseases and strokes, called the resolution "historic", saying it created a political mandate. Khaled Abdel Ghafar, Egypt's Minister of Health and Population, who submitted the resolution to the Assembly, said: "The resolution gives every country a framework



Stroke is a medical emergency that occurs when blood flow to the brain is interrupted, due to a blockage or bleeding. GETTY IMAGES

to close the gaps in stroke care systematically... Commitment today means fewer deaths and fewer disabled citizens tomorrow."

As per estimates published in an article in the peer-reviewed *International Journal of Stroke*, the crude incidence of stroke in India ranges from 108 to

172 per 1,00,000 people per year, with a one-month case fatality rate between 18% and 42%. There are only 8,000-odd neurologists and neurosurgeons for India's entire population, and this compounds concerns about the inadequacy of care. "One detail that is more important than

new strokes annually or even the one-month case fatality is the millions of man hours lost (including that of the caretakers)," says K. Ganapathy, senior neurologist and past president of the Neurological Society of India.

'Wake-up call'

"There is enough data now to show that strokes occur much earlier in India than in other countries. While specific genes have been identified, it is their interaction with a modifiable environment that actually increases the risk of stroke in the young," he says. The good news is that risk factors such as hypertension, diabetes, tobacco use, obesity, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet, air pollution, and alcohol misuse are all reversible.

He adds: "This resolution should be a wake-up call for India. With the current state of digital literacy and an excellent telecom network, India can show the rest of the world that stroke prevention is eminently doable."

E.S. Krishnamoorthy, a neuropsychiatrist and founder of the Buddhi Clinic, says, "WHO's first dedicated stroke resolution is a landmark moment as it recognises stroke not just as an acute medical emergency, but as a lifelong neurological and rehabilitation challenge. For countries like India, where stroke-related disability is rising rapidly, the emphasis on prevention, rehabilitation, health-system readiness and scalable neurorehabilitation models is especially important."

- **Key Terms and Explanations**
- **Stroke (Ischemic vs. Hemorrhagic):** A cerebrovascular emergency occurring when blood supply to a part of the brain is interrupted or reduced, depriving brain tissue of oxygen and nutrients.
 - *Ischemic Stroke:* Occurs when a blood vessel supplying the brain is blocked by a clot (e.g., due to atherosclerosis). This accounts for the vast majority of stroke cases globally.
 - *Hemorrhagic Stroke:* Occurs when a weakened blood vessel ruptures and bleeds into or around the brain (e.g., caused by uncontrolled severe hypertension).
- **World Health Assembly (WHA):** The supreme decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO), attended by delegations from all WHO member states. It meets annually in Geneva to determine policies, appoint the Director-General, and approve the program budget.
- **Crude Incidence Rate:** The total number of new cases of a specific disease diagnosed in a defined population over a specified time period (typically one year), expressed without adjusting for demographic characteristics like age or sex distribution. For instance, a rate of 150 per 100,000 means 150 individuals contracted the condition out of every 100,000 people in that population in a year.
- **Case Fatality Rate (CFR):** The proportion of people diagnosed with a specific medical condition who die from it within a designated timeframe. A one-month CFR of 40% implies that out of 100 individuals who suffered a stroke, 40 succumbed to the condition within 30 days of onset.
- **Modifiable Risk Factors:** Lifestyles, behaviors, or metabolic conditions that can be altered, treated, or managed via clinical interventions or behavioral changes to lower the probability of disease. Examples include smoking, physical inactivity, obesity, and hypertension.
- **Epidemiological Transition:** A long-term shift in the primary patterns of disease and mortality within a population, where infectious, nutritional, and communicable diseases are progressively replaced by chronic, non-communicable degenerative diseases (NCDs) as life expectancy rises and lifestyles change.
- **Neurorehabilitation:** A specialized, multidisciplinary medical process designed to facilitate recovery from a nervous system injury, aiming to minimize functional impairments, maximize independence, and improve the quality of life for stroke survivors.



- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The global and domestic discourse around cerebrovascular diseases centers on moving away from viewing stroke purely as an acute clinical event toward managing it as a systemic, lifelong public health challenge.

- **The Paradigm Shift in Health Governance**

- Global health policy has historically focused on infectious diseases or maternal and child health. There is now a distinct shift toward formalizing political mandates for non-communicable conditions. By treating stroke as a public health priority rather than an isolated clinical emergency, international frameworks aim to force national governments to allocate dedicated budgetary, structural, and human resources across the entire spectrum of care.

- **The Full Care Pathway Approach**

- True management of stroke cannot be achieved simply by building tertiary care ICUs. It requires a continuous, integrated pipeline:

- Focusing exclusively on acute treatment while ignoring long-term neurorehabilitation creates an unsustainable cycle of post-stroke disability and economic dependency.

- **The Early-Onset Paradox in Developing Economies**

- In emerging economies like India, strokes do not follow Western demographic timelines; they strike individuals significantly earlier, often during their peak productive years. This phenomenon is driven by the complex interaction between genetic predispositions and a rapidly deteriorating modifiable environment (uncontrolled hypertension, worsening ambient air quality, urbanization, and metabolic disorders).

- **The Macroeconomic and Caregiver Burden**

- The impact of a stroke extends far beyond the individual patient. The true socioeconomic toll is measured in the millions of productive economic man-hours lost. Because comprehensive rehabilitation infrastructure is scarce, families are forced to step into caregiving roles, pulling healthy individuals out of the active workforce and dealing a double blow to household income and national productivity.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- The trajectory of non-communicable disease management and stroke care reveals a slow transition from institutional neglect to structured public intervention.

Period/Year	Major Milestone / Policy Shift	Systemic Impact & Description
Pre-Independence to 1970s	Communicable Disease Dominance	Public health policy was almost entirely absorbed by existential battles against malaria, smallpox, tuberculosis, and maternal mortality. Chronic conditions like stroke were viewed as inevitable diseases of old age and left to individual clinical care.
1983	First National Health Policy (NHP)	Acknowledged the growing footprint of non-communicable conditions, but the healthcare delivery system remained highly centralized in urban tertiary hospitals, leaving rural populations without diagnostic avenues.
2008–2010	Launch of NPCDCS	The government launched the <i>National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke</i> . This marked the first formal integration of stroke care into sub-district level healthcare planning.
2017	National Health Policy (NHP 2017)	Explicitly targeted a 25% relative reduction in premature mortality from non-communicable diseases by 2025, elevating hypertension and metabolic screening to standard primary healthcare objectives.
2018	Ayushman Bharat Launch	Established Health and Wellness Centers (HWCs) to operationalize population-based screening for hypertension and diabetes, aiming to intercept stroke risks at the community level.
Present Era	The WHA Global Mandate	The passage of the first-ever dedicated stroke resolution by the World Health Assembly formalizes a global political mandate, forcing member states to legally and financially account for structural gaps in stroke care.

- **Way Forward**

- Transforming stroke care from a policy resolution into an effective public reality requires a practical, well-structured action plan.

- **Institutionalizing Hub-and-Spoke Telestroke Networks**

- To overcome the severe shortage of urban specialists, states must design formal hub-and-spoke networks using existing digital infrastructure:

- **The Hubs:** Medical Colleges and advanced tertiary care facilities equipped with 24/7 neurology teams.

- **The Spokes:** District and sub-divisional hospitals equipped with basic CT scanners and linked to the hubs via secure, high-speed digital systems.

- **The Workflow:** When a patient arrives at a spoke hospital with stroke symptoms, local doctors perform an immediate CT scan and share it digitally with the hub. The remote specialist confirms the diagnosis and guides the local team through thrombolysis within the golden hour.

- **Task-Shifting and Capacity Building for Frontline Workers**

- Relying solely on specialized neurologists for primary care is structurally impossible. Healthcare systems must implement *task-shifting* strategies:

- **Primary Care Training:** Train MBBS medical officers at Community Health Centers to confidently handle primary stroke stabilization and administer thrombolytic medications safely.

- **Frontline Screening:** Empower frontline health workers, such as ASHA and ANM personnel, to use mobile applications and non-communicable disease (NCD) portals for door-to-door hypertension screening.

- **Community Education:** Train local healthcare workers to teach communities the **FAST** signs, creating an effective ground-level alert network that speeds up emergency responses.

- **Expanding Financial Protection to Long-Term Rehabilitation**

- Acute stabilization is only the first step in a long process. Public insurance programs must adapt to protect families from long-term financial strain:

- **Incentivizing Outpatient Packages:** Expand public health insurance programs (like Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY) to cover outpatient physical therapy, speech therapy, and occupational care.

- **Deactivating Financial Roadblocks:** Prevent families from abandoning rehabilitation due to ongoing out-of-pocket costs, helping survivors regain independence and return to the active workforce.

- **Structural Preventive Measures and Behavioral Interventions**

- To reduce the long-term incidence of stroke, governments must deploy broad public health campaigns alongside clear regulatory measures:

- **Fiscal Measures:** Implement targeted taxation on high-sodium processed foods, sugar-sweetened beverages, and tobacco products to discourage unhealthy consumption habits.

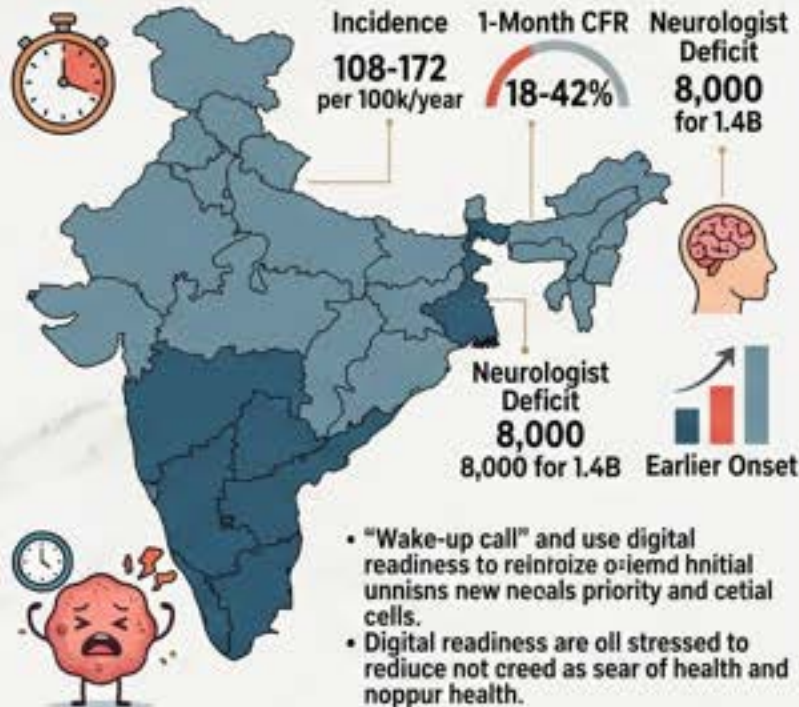
- **Front-of-Pack Labeling:** Introduce mandatory, clear front-of-pack nutritional warning labels on processed foods to help consumers make healthier choices.

- **Urban Design Improvements:** Integrate green spaces, pedestrian-friendly walkways, and open-air recreational areas into urban planning to reduce stress and



GLOBAL & NATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE FIRST WHA STROKE RESOLUTION: A UPSC CSE ANALYSIS

INDIA-SPECIFIC STROKE EPIDEMIOLOGY

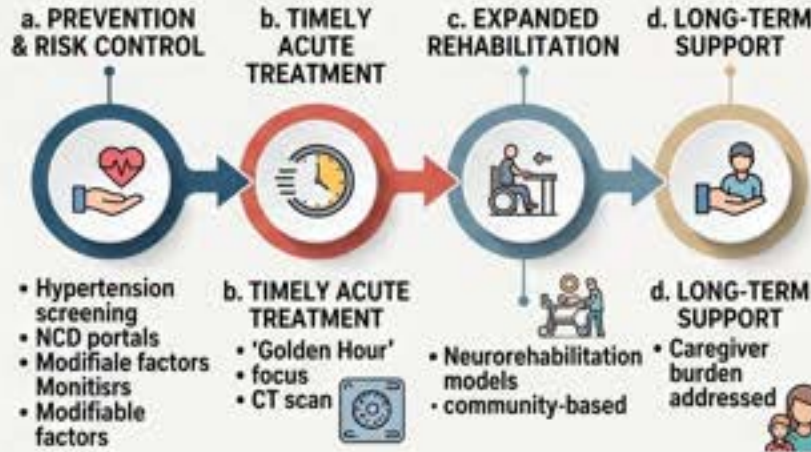


KEY METRICS & GLOBAL PARADIGM SHIFT



- WHA (supreme decision-making body) passes **historic resolution** creating a **political mandate**
 - **12 million** annual cases, **>50% fatal**, **2/3 disabled**, not just acinical event
 - Recognizes stroke as a **systemic public health priority**, not just acute clinical event
 - Submitting countries:
- Priority**

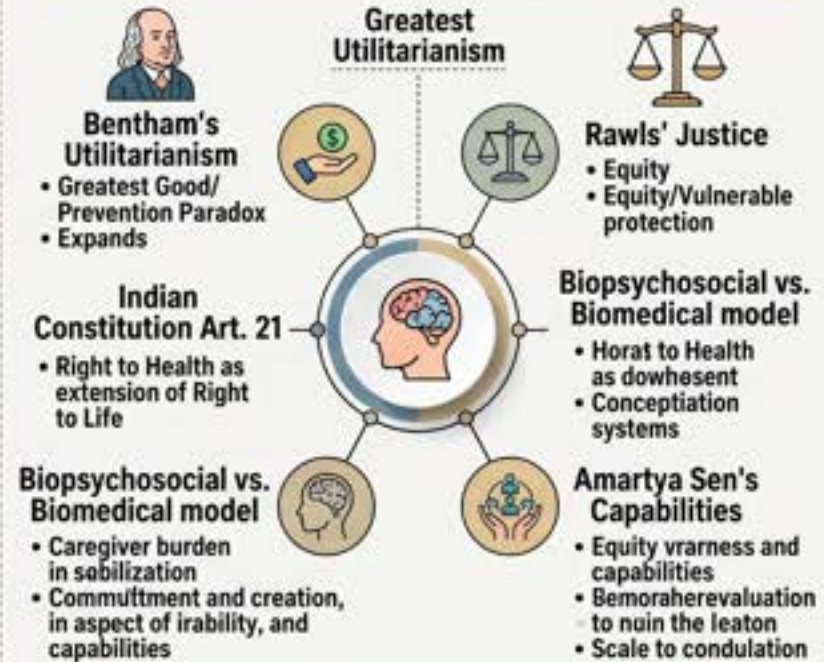
THE FULL CARE PATHWAY



SYLLABUS MAPPING & PREVIOUS YEARS QUESTIONS (PYQs)



LOGICAL, PHILOSOPHICAL, & LEGAL BASE



WAY FORWARD & INNOVATIONS



How has the BCCI resisted RTI scrutiny?

Why does the body not qualify as a public authority? What does the CIC order say? What are the implications?

Anandha Bhasani

The story so far

The Central Information Commission (CIC) on May 18 held that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) does not qualify as a "public authority" under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005, and therefore cannot be directed to furnish information under the RTI Act.

What is the legal position?

The BCCI has maintained that it is a private and autonomous body and therefore does not qualify as a "public authority" under Section 2(b) of the RTI Act. The provision defines a "public authority" as "any authority or body or institution of self-government established or constituted" by the Constitution, laws enacted by Parliament or State Legislatures, or through government notification. It also includes entities that are "controlled, controlled or substantially financed" by the government, including those receiving substantial public funding. The cricket body has argued that, as an autonomous, non-profit society registered under the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975 (1975 Act), it does not fall within the ambit of "State" under Article 12 of the Constitution. This Article includes within its scope the Union and State governments, legislatures, and "all local or other authorities" functioning within the territory of India or under government control.

What did expert bodies recommend earlier?

An earlier Bench of the CIC, headed by Information Commissioner M. Sridhar Acharya, had in 2010 held that the BCCI qualified as a public authority under the RTI Act and directed it to appoint Public Information Officers and establish an RTI compliance

The CIC held that the BCCI, being registered as a "private association of individuals", cannot be treated as a public authority under the RTI Act.

The CIC's May 18 decision was passed pursuant to this reconsideration. Further, the Justice B. S. Lodha Committee, constituted by the Supreme Court in 2015 to recommend reforms within the BCCI, had described the cricket body's functioning as a "closed-door and back-room affair" and urged Parliament to "seriously" consider bringing it under the RTI Act. The Law Commission, too, in 2016, recommended that sports bodies discharging public functions be brought within the RTI regime. However, neither recommendation was translated into law.

What does the latest CIC order say?

The CIC held that the BCCI, being registered under the 1975 Act as "a private association of individuals", cannot be treated as a public authority under the RTI Act. It observed that the RTI regime does not extend to every entity "merely because they are registered under a statute", drawing a distinction between entities created by law and those formed through private initiative and only later registered under a statutory framework. It noted that the BCCI was formed by cricket administrators and that registration under the 1975 Act merely grants legal recognition, not statutory status.

The Commission also relied on the Supreme Court's ruling in *Sanjivani Jain v. Union of India* (2005), which held that "state supervision or regulation by the state is insufficient to alter the private character of the organisation". In that judgment, the apex court had observed that although the BCCI performs significant public functions in regulating cricket in India, it would not qualify as "State" under Article 12 of the Constitution in the absence of close and pervasive governmental control over its affairs.

On the issue of funding, the Commission observed that Section 2(b)(d) of the RTI Act covers bodies that are "substantially financed" by the government. However, it clarified that the term refers to financial assistance so significant that the entity's survival would depend on it, and not merely benefits such as tax exemptions. The CIC held that the exemptions relied upon by the BCCI are uniformly available to non-profit organisations meeting the prescribed conditions under the Income Tax Act, 1961. It also pointed out that the BCCI generates massive revenues through media rights, sponsorships, and broadcasting deals.

What are the implications?

Shelving the BCCI within the RTI framework would have established criteria to seek information not only on its finances but also on its day-to-day functioning. Section 142D of the National Sports Governance Act, 2023 provides that a recognised sports organisation would be treated as a public authority only "with respect to the utilisation of government grants or financial assistance" received by it. By making government funding the determining criterion, this provision effectively excludes the BCCI from the RTI regime.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

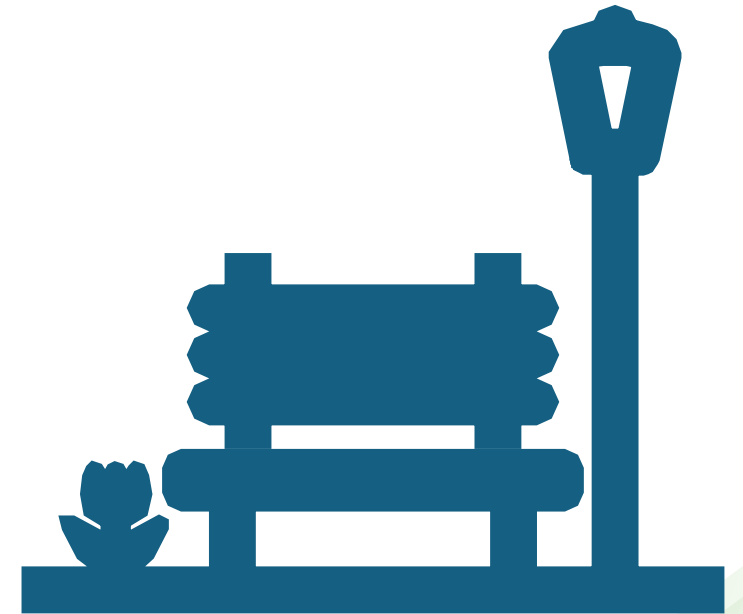
- **Public Authority (Section 2(h) of the RTI Act, 2005):** This refers to any authority, body, or institution of self-government established or constituted by the Constitution, by parliament or state laws, or via government notifications. It also captures entities that are owned, controlled, or "substantially financed" by public funds, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that rely significantly on government money.
- **State under Article 12 of the Constitution:** This definition outlines which entities are bound by the Fundamental Rights obligations in Part III. It includes the executive and legislative organs of the Union and State governments, local bodies (like municipalities), and "other authorities" that operate under the control or as instrumentalities of the government.
- **Substantial Financing:** A legal threshold determining whether an institution is financially dependent on the state. It requires direct or indirect funding significant enough to impact the entity's core operational survival, distinct from routine, systemic tax benefits or infrastructure access available to all non-profits.
- **Autonomous Charitable Society:** A legal structure where individuals voluntarily associate for public, charitable, or cultural purposes. Registered under state-specific laws (such as the Tamil Nadu Societies Registration Act, 1975), it grants the entity a distinct legal persona without transforming its private, self-governing character into a statutory body.
- **Quasi-Judicial Body:** A non-judicial entity—such as the Central Information Commission (CIC)—invested with the authority to adjudicate disputes, interpret statutory provisions, and issue binding orders, mirroring the analytical rigor and objective functions of a court of law.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core debate centers on a structural paradox: can an entity be fundamentally private in its origin and finances, yet thoroughly public in its social and functional impact?
- **The Argument for Maintaining Private Status**
- **Private Origin Over Statutory Creation:** Legally, there is a sharp line between bodies *created by* a statute and bodies *registered under* a statute. Registration simply provides a voluntary association of individuals with a structured legal identity; it does not mean the legislature created it.
- **Absence of Deep State Control:** Regulatory supervision by government departments or compliance with sports guidelines does not equal ownership. For a private body to be classified as an arm of the State, governmental control must be deep, pervasive, and structural, rather than merely regulatory or supervisory.
- **Financial Independence:** When an organization generates its primary revenue through private media rights, commercial sponsorships, and broadcasting arrangements, it falls outside the "substantially financed" clause of Section 2(h). Universal tax exemptions under the Income Tax Act, 1961, are standard policy instruments for non-profits and do not constitute direct state funding.
- **The Argument for Public Accountability**
- **De Facto Monopoly and Public Functions:** When an institution holds an exclusive monopoly over a sport, selects teams that represent the sovereign nation internationally, and utilizes national symbols, it performs public duties that directly impact public interest.
- **The Recommendation of Expert Committees:** Independent bodies like the Justice R.M. Lodha Committee (2015) and the Law Commission of India (Report No. 275) have consistently argued that opaque "closed-door" governance in sports conflicts with democratic principles. They advocate for bringing dominant sports bodies under the RTI Act to ensure greater transparency.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The tension between sporting autonomy and public accountability has evolved through several key judicial and legislative milestones over the last few decades.
- Foundational Private Setup (1928)
- 1928
- The Board of Control for Cricket in India is formed as a private, voluntary association of cricket administrators, registering as a charitable society to manage the game without state patronage.
- The Zee Telefilms Landmark Precedent
- 2005
- In *Zee Telefilms Ltd. v. Union of India*, the Supreme Court rules by a majority that the cricket board is not 'State' under Article 12. It establishes that performing public functions does not automatically make a private body a constitutional authority unless there is deep and pervasive state control.
- The Lodha Committee Reforms
- 2015
- Appointed by the Supreme Court to clean up cricket governance, the Justice R.M. Lodha Committee recommends systemic structural overhauls and explicitly urges Parliament to bring the board within the RTI Act's ambit to counter opaque decision-making.
- The Law Commission Intervention
- 2018
- The Law Commission of India issues Report No. 275, strongly recommending that sports bodies discharging public functions and enjoying de facto monopolies be viewed through a functional lens and integrated into the RTI framework.
- The Statutory Boundary Shift
- 2025
- The introduction of Section 14(2) of the National Sports Governance Act, 2025, codifies a strict standard: a recognized sports organization is treated as a public authority *only* regarding its utilization of direct government grants or financial assistance.
- The Central Information Commission Reaffirmation
- 2026
- Aligning with the 2005 *Zee Telefilms* precedent and the fiscal framework of the 2025 Act, the CIC rules that without direct public funding dependencies or statutory creation, private societies remain outside Section 2(h) of the RTI Act.



- **Way Forward**

- To resolve the conflict between protecting private administrative autonomy and ensuring public accountability, India could consider a more balanced, hybrid governance model.
- **Adopting Voluntary, Proactive Disclosure:** Even if large sports organizations remain outside the formal jurisdiction of the RTI Act, they could voluntarily adopt the proactive disclosure principles outlined in Section 4 of the Act. Routinely publishing financial audits, selection criteria, and meeting minutes online would build public trust without compromising sensitive commercial data.
- **Establishing Independent Sports Ombudsmen:** Parliament could introduce a specialized, independent regulatory framework tailored for large, self-funded sports bodies. Creating an independent ombudsman would give players and the public a reliable way to resolve grievances regarding selections or financial transparency, avoiding the need for direct government intervention or complex constitutional lawsuits.

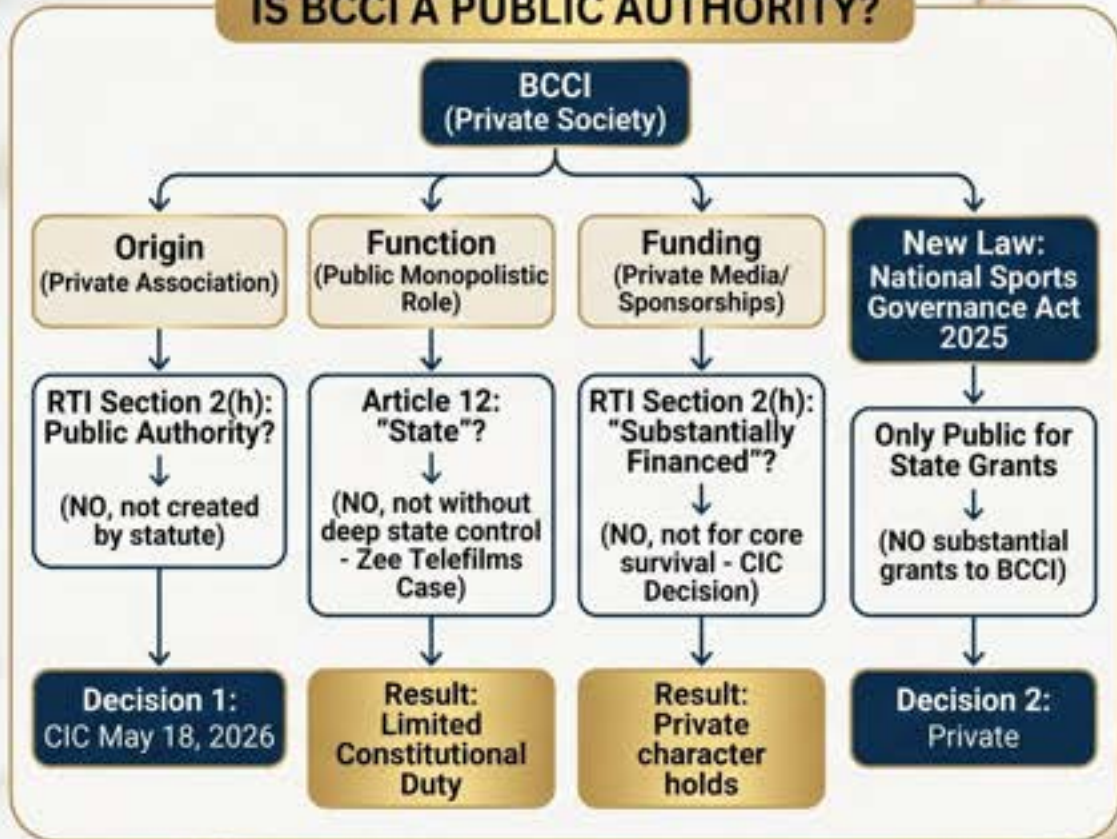
- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **Mains Questions**

- **"The Right to Information Act is not just about citizens' empowerment alone; it essentially redefines the concept of accountability."** Discuss. (*GS Paper II, 2018*)
- **"Introduce the concept of 'Other Authorities' given under Article 12 of the Constitution of India. Discuss its changing dimensions with the help of recent judicial pronouncements."** (*Analogue to Constitutional Law/Optional themes*)
- **"In the context of corporate governance and public utility, discuss how non-state actors performing public duties can be made ethically accountable to the larger society."** (*GS Paper IV, 2021 variant*)

UPSC ANALYSIS: DECODING BCCI'S RTI STATUS

IS BCCI A PUBLIC AUTHORITY?



EVOLUTION OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY DEBATE



KEY UPSC IMPLICATIONS

- GS Linkages to GS-2 Regulatory Bodies, Transparency
- GS-4 Ethical Governance, Integrity

THE ACCOUNTABILITY GAP (Lodha/Law Commission)

- Closed-door affairs,
- potential for opacity, ethical risks in selection and finance

THE LEGAL REALITY (CIC/Sports Act 2025)

- Limited State Control,
- private funding base, preservation of private administrative status

What did the SC say about bail under UAPA?

What are the disagreements between recent Supreme Court rulings on UAPA bail? Why is bail so difficult under Section 43D(5) of the UAPA? What did the Court say in *K.A. Najeeb* about prolonged incarceration and bail? What role does Article 21 play in UAPA bail jurisprudence?

Krishnadas Rajagopal

The story so far

In May 22, the Supreme Court granted six months of interim bail to two accused in the 2020 Delhi riots case – Abdul Khalid Sali and Tasveem Ahmad. It also referred to a larger Bench the question of whether prolonged incarceration and delay in trial can override the stringent bail curbs under anti-terror laws such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA). This particular law empowers the Centre to designate not only organisations but also individuals as ‘terrorists’.

What concerns did the Court raise about UAPA bail rulings by smaller Benches?

A three-judge Bench in the 2023 judgment, *Union of India v. K.A. Najeeb*, had settled the principle that an undertrial cannot be made to indefinitely wait behind bars for completion of trial, however grave the offence may be.

On May 18, a Bench of justices B.V. Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan in *Syed Yilhanur Andabul v. National Investigation Agency*, voiced serious reservations about smaller Benches “hollowing out” the principle laid down in the *Najeeb* verdict – that constitutional courts must intervene and grant bail in UAPA cases in which accused persons had spent years in pre-trial incarceration.

Justice Bhuyan, who authored the judgment, questioned the Supreme Court judgment of January 5, 2026 (*Gulshah Fatima v. State, Government of NCT of Delhi*), which denied bail to former JNU student leader Umar Khalid and his co-accused Sharjeel Inam, who were charged under the UAPA in the Delhi riots ‘larger conspiracy’ case. While granting five others bail, a Division Bench of justices Atsved Kumar and N.V. Anjaria had denied the two of them relief.



Activist Umar Khalid being detained by the Delhi Police for defying prohibitory orders during the anti-CAA protests at Red Fort in New Delhi in 2020. (PI)

The *Najeeb* verdict was the Court’s response to the growing use of Section 43D(5) as a weapon in the hands of the state.

prima facie acknowledging that they were the “alleged masterminds”. Mr. Khalid had already spent over five years in jail.

Justice Bhuyan’s remarks prompted the Delhi Police to raise objections before Justice Kumar, the author of the *Gulshah Fatima* verdict, during the bail hearing of Mr. Sali and Mr. Ahmad.

Additional Solicitor General S.V. Raju argued the *Andabul* judgment had muddled the bail waters in UAPA cases. He rhetorically asked whether Ajmal Kasab – or Hafiz Saeed, if extradited from Pakistan – would also be entitled to bail merely because they had spent five years in prison awaiting trial.

Justice Kumar referred the question of law to a larger Bench, saying that a “perceived conflict” between two coordinate Benches (of equal strength) of the Court did not need expressions of “serious reservation”, but “resolution”.

Why is bail so difficult under Section 43D(5) of the UAPA?

The section makes securing bail under the UAPA difficult. The proviso to it mandates that an accused person will not get bail if a court, on perusing the case diary or charge-sheet, found “reasonable grounds” to believe that the accusations were prima facie true.

The apex court’s 2025 judgment in *National Investigation Agency v. Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali* saw a Division Bench headed by Justice A.M. Khanwilkar (now retired and currently serving as chairperson of the Lokpal) hold that an “elaborate examination” of evidence was not necessary for a court to establish prima facie guilt. The court was merely required to glance through “broad probabilities” to decide if the allegations were true, and deny bail.

Section 43D(5) turned bail jurisprudence on its head. The normal presumption of ‘bail, not jail’ was reversed. While ordinary bail jurisprudence was rooted in the fundamental principle that a person was innocent until proven guilty, Section 43D(5) turned the burden onto the accused, supposing the person to be guilty until found innocent.

How did the *K.A. Najeeb* judgment soften the bail bar?

The *Najeeb* verdict was the Court’s response to the growing use of Section 43D(5) as a weapon in the hands of the state. For incarcerated accused persons with limited financial and legal resources, disproving terror charges becomes an uphill battle even as the prospect of trial recedes with passing years. It was in this context that the *Najeeb* judgment, authored by Justice Surya Kant (as he was then), clarified that constitutional courts could “melt down” the rigour of Section 43D(5) and grant bail to a UAPA accused who

had already spent a “substantial period of time” in jail due to gross delay in trial.

The *Najeeb* verdict quoted precedents to hold that constitutional courts cannot become mere spectators before the power of Section 43D(5). They had to intervene to protect the fundamental right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

What did the Court clarify in the *Andabul* verdict about Section 43D(5) and Article 21?

In the *Andabul* judgment, Justice Bhuyan said the Court must not play ball to the Centre’s argument that the gravity of offences under UAPA outweighed the human right to bail. The judge pointed out that the conviction rate under UAPA was only 2.6% across the country.

Justices Nagarathna and Bhuyan observed that an undertrial cannot be punished with denial of bail for the state’s ineptitude to hold a trial on time. If the alleged offence was a serious one, it was all the more necessary for the prosecution to conclude the trial expeditiously. Bail cannot be denied solely on the ground that the charges were very serious.

The *Andabul* judgment said the Supreme Court in *Gulshah Fatima* case read *Najeeb* judgment wrong when it said the three-judge Bench had created an automatic entitlement to bail on account of delay. Justice Bhuyan clarified that the *Najeeb* verdict had never advanced the proposition that bail should be given in every UAPA case of prolonged incarceration. Rather, *Najeeb* case only cautioned constitutional courts against treating the statutory embargo under Section 43D(5) as the sole justification for continued detention while ignoring broader constitutional principles of personal liberty and speedy trial. It held that Section 43D(5) was subordinate to Article 21.

Did the *Gulshah Fatima* judgment stray from the ‘binding precedent’ of *Najeeb* verdict?

The May 22 order, referring the question of bail in UAPA to a larger Bench, argued that the *Andabul* judgment had misunderstood the reasoning behind the *Gulshah Fatima* verdict. It said the judgment, which had denied bail to Mr. Khalid and Mr. Inam, had correctly applied the *Najeeb* principle. It said the *Najeeb* judgment had appreciated the strict bail regime of Section 43D(5) while advising relaxation only in cases in which there was no likelihood of completion of trial within the reasonable time and the accused had already spent a long time behind bars.

The May 22 order took pains to clarify that the *Gulshah Fatima* judgment accepted the *Najeeb* judgment as a binding precedent. It had recognised the central place of Article 21 in the constitutional scheme and that pre-trial incarceration cannot assume the character of punishment in UAPA cases. It said that the two were denied bail on an “accused-specific evaluation” based on factors such as the evidence, their roles in the alleged conspiracy, and the need to protect the integrity of the trial.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA):** This is India's principal anti-terror legislation. It grants the Central Government extraordinary powers to deal with activities that threaten the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the nation. A key amendment in 2019 expanded these powers, allowing the state to designate individual citizens as "terrorists," a label previously reserved only for organizations.

- **Section 43D(5) of the UAPA:** The specific clause that sets UAPA bail applications apart from regular criminal cases. It prohibits a court from releasing an accused person on bail if, after looking at the police diary or the chargesheet, it finds reasonable grounds to believe the accusations are *prima facie* true.

- **Prima Facie:** A Latin legal term meaning "at first sight" or "on the face of it." In standard law, it means a case has enough initial evidence to proceed to trial. Under UAPA bail hearings, however, it means that if the prosecution's story looks plausible on paper, the court must accept it as true for the time being and deny bail, without testing whether that evidence will actually hold up under cross-examination.

- **Undertrial Incarceration:** The period of time an accused individual spends locked up in prison while their trial is still ongoing. When a trial takes years or decades to conclude, this pre-trial detention effectively turns into a form of punishment served before a final verdict is ever reached.

- **Coordinate Bench:** A bench of the same strength (for example, two judges vs. two judges) within the same court. Under Indian judicial rules, one coordinate bench cannot simply overrule another. If their views clash, the issue must be sent to a larger bench to resolve the disagreement.

- **Article 21 of the Indian Constitution:** The fundamental right that protects life and personal liberty. It serves as the ultimate constitutional safeguard, guaranteeing citizens the right to a speedy, fair trial and protecting them from prolonged, arbitrary imprisonment by the state.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core of this legal debate centers on how statutory anti-terror rules interact with basic constitutional rights, creating a direct conflict within India's judicial system.

- **The Reversal of Standard Criminal Jurisprudence**

- In standard criminal law, the guiding principle is "**bail, not jail**," anchored by the presumption that a person is innocent until proven guilty. Section 43D(5) turns this dynamic entirely on its head. By requiring the accused to show that the allegations against them are not *prima facie* true based almost entirely on the prosecution's own files, the law shifts the practical burden of proof onto the defense at the earliest stage of proceedings.

- **The Judicial Tug-of-War: Watali vs. Najeeb**

- The Supreme Court's approach to this strict standard has swung between two major rulings:

- **The Restrictive Approach (*NIA v. Zahoor Ahmad Shah Watali, 2019*):** This ruling barred courts from doing a deep dive into the evidence during a bail hearing. It held that judges should only look at the "broad probabilities" of the case based on the prosecution's chargesheet. This made passing the *prima facie* test exceptionally difficult for defendants.

- **The Constitutional Safety Valve (*Union of India v. K.A. Najeeb, 2021*):** A three-judge bench introduced a crucial exception. It ruled that statutory limits like Section 43D(5) cannot override the fundamental rights guaranteed by Article 21. If an undertrial faces an indefinitely delayed trial and has already spent a significant amount of time in prison, constitutional courts have a duty to step in and grant bail.

- **The Coordinate Bench Conflict**

- The recent tension stems from two different two-judge benches interpreting these precedents in different ways:

- **The Focus on Liberty (*Syed Iftikhar Andrabi v. NIA, 2026*):** This bench voiced deep concerns that smaller panels were chipping away at the *Najeeb* principle. Pointing to low national conviction rates under UAPA (ranging from 2% to 6%), it argued that the state cannot use its own delays in processing trials as a reason to keep people jailed indefinitely.

- **The Case-by-Case Evaluation (*Gulfisha Fatima v. State, 2026*):** This bench denied bail to prominent accused figures by focusing on their specific alleged roles in a wider conspiracy. It maintained that *Najeeb* does not offer an automatic right to bail based solely on trial delays, but requires looking closely at the unique risks and evidence of each individual case.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The tension between state security powers and individual liberty has evolved through several decades of legislation and shifting judicial boundaries.

- Enactment of UAPA

- 1967

- The law was originally introduced to address threats to India's territorial integrity and sovereignty. At this stage, it focused primarily on unlawful associations and did not feature the severe restrictions on bail that exist today.

- The TADA Era

- 1985–1987

- The Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act introduced strict statutory limits on bail to counter rising insurgencies. Due to widespread criticism over the misuse of long pre-trial detentions, Parliament allowed the act to lapse in 1995.

- The POTA Experiment

- 2002

- Following global security shifts after 9/11, Parliament enacted the Prevention of Terrorism Act, reintroducing strict bail conditions for terror suspects. It was repealed in 2004 following sustained pushback from civil liberty groups over systemic abuse.

- The Absorption of Strict Standards

- 2004–2008

- Instead of passing a brand-new law after POTA's repeal, the government amended the original 1967 UAPA. Following the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, Section 43D(5) was added, permanently embedding the strict anti-terror bail bar into ordinary law.

- The Individual Designation Shift

- 2019

- Amendments empowered the Central Government to designate specific individuals as terrorists. That same year, the Watali judgment limited judicial scrutiny during bail hearings, setting up the current debate over prolonged detentions.

- **Way Forward**

- Resolving the conflict over anti-terror bail requires practical structural reforms that protect national security while upholding basic constitutional standards.
- **Introducing a Statutory Time Cap:** Section 43D(5) could be amended to include a clear time limit. For example, if a trial fails to begin within two years of the chargesheet being filed, the strict *prima facie* bail bar could automatically drop, allowing courts to consider regular bail factors like flight risk and evidence tampering.
- **Separating the Legal Charges:** Courts could implement a system of bifurcated hearings. The initial phase would look strictly at whether there is solid evidence of actual terrorism under the UAPA. If that link is weak, the terror-specific bail restrictions would be lifted, and the remaining charges would proceed under standard criminal procedure laws.
- **Establishing Dedicated Fast-Track Courts:** If the state chooses to use extraordinary laws, it should back them up with dedicated resources. Requiring day-to-day trials in UAPA cases before specialized, fully staffed benches would help ensure that verdicts are reached before pre-trial detentions turn into multi-year sentences.
- **Creating Frameworks for Prosecutorial Accountability:** To prevent the over-application of anti-terror charges, the legal system needs stronger checks against malicious or poorly grounded prosecutions. Introducing clear avenues for compensation for individuals who spend years in pre-trial detention before being fully acquitted would encourage more precise, careful use of the law.



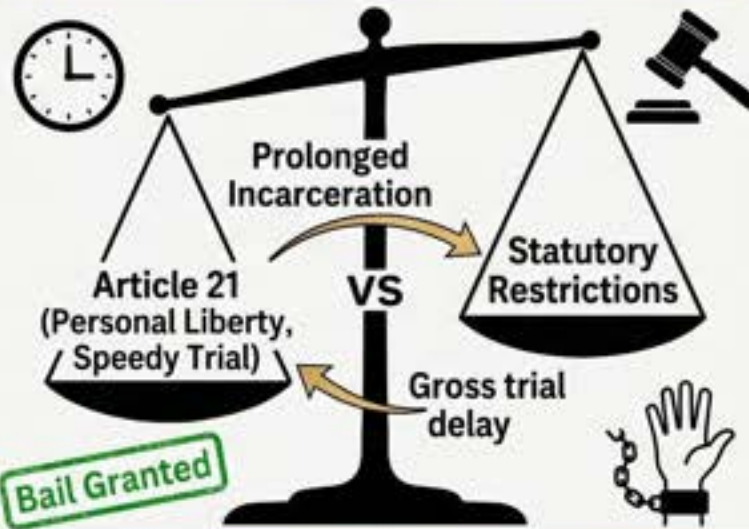
I. THE STATUTORY BAIL BAR (UAPA s.43D(5))

Key Case: *NIA v. Watali* (2019)



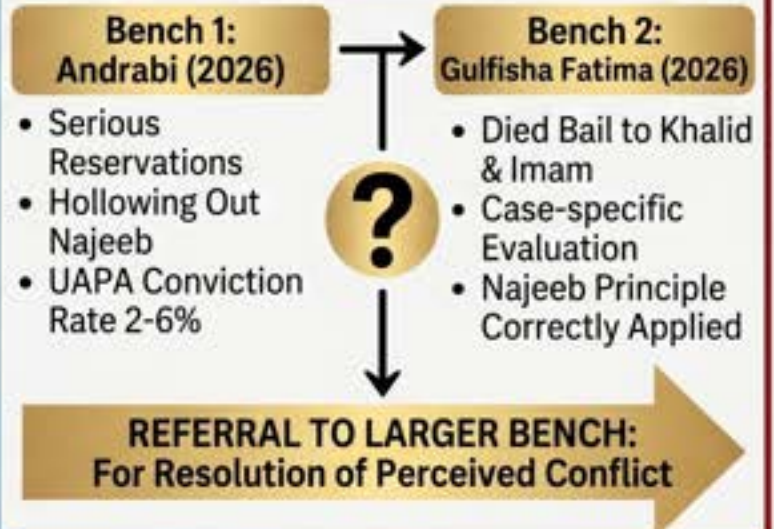
II. THE CONSTITUTIONAL SAFETY VALVE (The Najeeb Principle)

Key Case: *Union of India v. K.A. Najeeb* (2021)



III. COORDINATE BENCH CLASH & THE LARGER BENCH

New coordinate bench conflict



CONCEPTUAL BASE: SHIFTING BLACKSTONE'S RATIO



Standard Criminal Law
✓ [One Innocent Suffer < Ten Guilty Escape]



UAPA s.43D(5)
✗ [One Terror Suspect Jail > National Risk]



UPSC ANALYSIS: Balancing State Security vs. Individual Liberty is critical for Governance & Judicial Impartiality.

Why did Kerala scrap the SilverLine project?

What was the project and why was it projected as a game-changer for Kerala's transport sector? Why did the land acquisition process trigger protests? What processes were put in place to acquire land? What were the concerns over the project?

Hiran Unnikrishnan

The story so far:

In May 20, the United Democratic Front (UDF) government in Kerala decided to denotify the SilverLine semi-high speed rail corridor, championed by the previous Left Democratic Front administration. Chief Minister V.D. Sarthesan said that the government was not against high speed rail development as such, but that the SilverLine project was both "an environmental disaster" and "financially unviable". He also announced that all the police cases registered against those opposing the project would be withdrawn.

What was the SilverLine project and why was it projected as a game-changer for Kerala's transport sector?

The SilverLine project, estimated at ₹64,000 crore, was designed as a semi-high speed rail corridor connecting Thiruvananthapuram to Kasaragod over 530 km. Its objective was to cut travel time from nearly 12 hours to about four. The project was to be implemented by the Kerala Rail Development Corporation (K-Rail), a joint venture between the State government and Indian Railways in a 51:49 equity partnership.



People protest in 2022 against the project by blocking the vehicle carrying a survey stone at Tharshathala in Kollam. C. SURESHKUMAR

As the proposed corridor cut through ecologically fragile areas, experts warned that massive embankments could disrupt drainage patterns and worsen flooding during monsoon

K-Rail was created in January 2017 to fast-track railway infrastructure development in the State. In 2021, the Kerala Cabinet granted in-principle approval for the SilverLine project and sanctioned some ₹2,100 crore to be raised through the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) for land acquisition.

The proposed line was a standard gauge corridor, planned largely parallel to the existing railway network and mostly elevated on embankments. It envisaged trains running at speeds up to 200 kmph, with nine-coach rakes carrying around 675 passengers and serving 11 stations along the route.

Why did the land acquisition process trigger such intense public outrage?

The project required the acquisition of around 1,221 hectares of land and was expected to affect more than 9,300 structures, potentially displacing nearly 20,000 people. Residents in several regions complained of officials arriving to place survey stones without prior notice. Allegations of heavy-handed enforcement during surveys in places such as Kozhuvallur near Chengamur and Madappally near Changanassery fuelled tensions.

By October 2021, authorities had laid around 1,651 survey stones across 42.6 km in 14 villages under tight police protection. Protests, stone removals, police deployment, and legal action followed. The protests soon snowballed into a State-wide movement backed by Opposition parties, particularly the Congress.

What legal and administrative mechanisms were put in place to acquire land?

In August 2021, special tahildar offices were set up across districts to oversee the process, followed by survey notices under the Kerala Survey and Boundaries Act, 1961 and acquisition proceedings under the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. But the process turned controversial. Land parcels marked for acquisition were effectively frozen, leaving thousands of residents unable to sell, mortgage, or develop their

properties for months. The project's social impact assessment and acquisition procedures were challenged in courts. Faced with mounting resistance, the government unveiled a ₹3,265 crore compensation package in 2022, which promised up to four times the market value of land along with housing assistance. Critics, however, argued that this would further strain Kerala's finances. Despite these assurances, protests continued, and the government attempted to resume surveys using geospatial technology.

What were the concerns over the technical and financial viability of the project?

First, the Detailed Project Report (DPR) projected a daily ridership of 80,000 passengers and annual revenue of ₹1,605 crore based on a fare of ₹2.75 per km, which many considered optimistic. Second, technical concerns also mounted over the decision to adopt standard gauge instead of the conventional broad gauge network. Engineers flagged the alignment, pointing to hundreds of sharp horizontal and vertical curves that could limit sustained semi-high-speed operations. Third, while the DPR pegged the project cost at around ₹63,000 crore, a NTI Aayog assessment reportedly placed it closer to ₹1.25 lakh crore. Fourth, as the proposed corridor cut through ecologically fragile wetlands, bird habitats, and flood prone regions, experts warned that massive embankments could disrupt drainage patterns and worsen flooding during monsoon. Finally, the Railways did not grant final approval to the project, citing incompatibility with existing infrastructure and concerns over future expansion of the national network.

What does the shelving of SilverLine mean for the future of K-Rail?

K-Rail is currently executing projects worth about ₹5,540 crore, including 66 railway overbridges, station modernisation at Thiruvananthapuram and Varkala, automatic signalling on the Ernakulam-Vallathol Nagar section, and implementation of the 'Kavach' train safety system. It also serves as consultant for KIIFB flyovers, Smart City projects, Kerala State Road Transport Corporation ticketing systems, and the Kochi Metro Phase II DPR, indicating that while the SilverLine project has been shelved, the institutional framework built around it remains active.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Semi-High-Speed Rail:** A rail transit network that operates at speeds ranging between 160 kmph and 250 kmph. It occupies a middle ground between conventional passenger trains and high-speed rail systems (bullet trains) that exceed 300 kmph, offering a balance between accelerated travel and project cost management.

- **K-Rail (Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited):** A joint venture Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) established with a 51:49 equity split between the Government of Kerala and the Ministry of Railways. It was created to bypass traditional bureaucratic delays and accelerate regional railway expansion.

- **KIIFB (Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board):** A statutory body used by the state government to raise off-budget finances for critical infrastructure projects. It mobilizes capital from financial markets through bonds and institutional loans, backed by state revenue guarantees.

- **Standard Gauge vs. Broad Gauge:** Track width specifications that determine network interoperability. Standard gauge measures 1,435 mm and is common in standalone metro networks worldwide. Broad gauge measures 1,676 mm and is the standard for the Indian Railways network. Using standard gauge creates a standalone "island network" that cannot directly connect to the national grid.

- **LARR Act, 2013:** The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013. A central law that mandates comprehensive social impact assessments, minimum consent thresholds from affected communities, and clear guidelines for compensation and rehabilitation.

- **Kavach System:** India's indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system. It prevents collisions by automatically applying brakes if a train overrides signals or if two trains end up on the same track.



- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The policy debate and ultimate cancellation of the SilverLine corridor highlight the deep tension between fast, technocratic infrastructure growth and the ecological realities of a high-density, climate-vulnerable region.

- **The Development Narrative**

- Proponents of the project argued that Kerala's economic growth is held back by an oversaturated, slow-moving transport network. The existing north-south rail corridor takes nearly 12 hours to traverse due to sharp curves and capacity limits.

- The project promised to cut travel time to under 4 hours, which supporters argued would boost business productivity, link northern and southern economic centers, remove thousands of personal vehicles from congested highways, and lower long-term carbon emissions.

- **The Sustainability Counter-Argument**

- Critics pointed out significant environmental, technical, and fiscal risks:

- **Environmental Displacement:** The proposed 530 km corridor required massive earth embankments that could act as artificial dams. This design threatened to divide the state's natural drainage systems, pave over fragile wetlands, and worsen seasonal flooding during intense monsoons.

- **Fiscal Over-Leveraging:** While initial project reports estimated the cost at roughly ₹63,000 crore, assessments by NITI Aayog suggested it could exceed ₹1.25 lakh crore. Opponents argued that taking on massive international loans for a passenger-only line would push the state into a severe debt trap.

- **Network Isolation:** Choosing a standard-gauge track meant the line could not integrate with the national broad-gauge network, forcing passengers to change trains to travel beyond state lines.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The challenge of navigating infrastructure development within a fragile landscape is a recurring theme in regional planning history.

- [Pre-1947 to late 20th Century] Evolution of fractured rail networks based on colonial trade priorities; Geographical bottlenecks shape the coastal corridor. | ▼

- [2017: Joint Venture Formed] K-Rail established as an SPV between the State and Indian Railways to break through administrative delays. | ▼

- [2021: Initial Approvals & Surveys] In-principle cabinet nod granted; ₹2,100 crore sanctioned via KIIFB. Controversial physical boundary marking triggers public protests. | ▼

- [2022-2025: Regulatory & Popular Deadlock] Ministry of Railways holds back final clearances over gauge differences. Widespread public protests halt land surveys. | ▼

- [2026: Official Denotification] Incoming administration cancels the project, removes alignment markers, and withdraws protest-related police cases.

- **Way Forward**

- To address regional transit needs without causing severe fiscal or environmental strain, policy planning should consider more balanced, incremental alternatives.

- **1. Incremental Upgradation Over Radical Overhauls**

- Instead of building a separate, high-cost standard gauge network, resources can be directed toward upgrading the existing broad-gauge infrastructure.

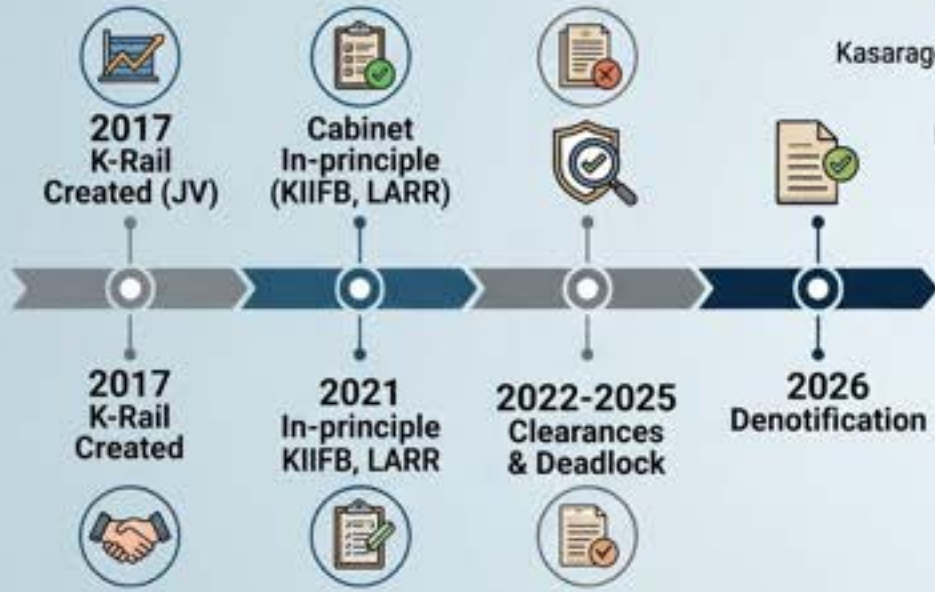
- By prioritizing track doubling, flattening sharp curves, installing automatic signaling, and deploying the indigenous **Kavach** safety system, passenger train speeds can be safely raised to 130–160 kmph within the current system, avoiding massive land acquisition.

- **2. Participatory Environmental and Social Governance**

- Future mega-projects should not begin physical mapping or land freezing until an independent, transparent Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Social Impact Assessment (SIA) are fully completed. Involving local gram sabhas early in the process builds public trust and replaces top-down enforcement with community-led consensus.

KERALA SILVERLINE PROJECT (DENOTIFIED): A COMPREHENSIVE UPSC ANALYSIS

KEY MILESTONES TIMELINE



PRIMARY CONCERNS

Social Impact (Protests)

~20k people displaced
~9,300 structures
LARR Act, 2013

NO SILVERLINE
NO LAND SURVEY STONES

Environmental Vulnerability

Elevated standard-gauge embankments acting as "dams"

Flood plains | Monsoons

Ecologically Fragile Zones | Drainage Patterns Disrupted

Technical & Financial Viability

Technical Vertical Curves

Speed Limits Due to Curves

Standard Gauge vs Broad Gauge Isolation

~63k Cr (DPR cost) vs ~1.25 L Cr (NITI Aayog cost)

Definitions

KIIFB (Off-Budget Cap)

LARR Act (Social Impact)

Multi-dimensional Analysis

Social Impact | Political Electoral Cycle

Legal Acquisition Friction | Ethical Administrative Dilemma

Way Forward (Balanced Policy)

Broad-Gauge Track Upgrades (New Signals, Track Doubling)

Incremental Upgrades (Flatten Curves, Automatic Signals, Kavach)

Participatory SIA/EIA

Decentralized Planning

UPSC Synergy & Epistemology

GS Papers

- GS2: Federalism
- GS3: Infrastructure/EIA
- GS4: Administrative Ethics

Epistemology (Data Validation)

30 | 12

A deadly pathogen

Bundibugyo ebolavirus

The strain that causes an often-fatal viral haemorrhagic fever is the primary causative agent in the current Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda

Ramya Kannan

At the heart of the current outbreak of Ebola in Central Africa is a quirky name – Bundibugyo. The less-known Bundibugyo ebolavirus strain that causes an often-fatal viral haemorrhagic fever is the primary causative agent in the outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda. While related to the more common Zaire ebolavirus and the Sudan ebolavirus, there have been only two documented Bundibugyo-related outbreaks (Uganda in 2007, and another in the DRC in 2012). Currently, there are no vaccines or specific therapies against it, though efforts are on to fast-track the development of a vaccine.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared with unusual alacrity, a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) even bypassing conventional consultations with expert bodies to do so. Soon after the DRC and Ugandan governments declared an outbreak of Ebola, on May 15, the WHO announced a PHEIC.

The name Bundibugyo comes from the days when pathogens used to be named after the places they were discovered in, though that naming convention is no longer considered fashionable. It was



first identified in 2007 in the Bundibugyo district of western Uganda. Bundibugyo, in the Western Region of Uganda, bordering the DRC, is the headquarters of the Bwamba Kingdom. After a mysterious illness broke out in 2007, the Bundibugyo ebolavirus was identified in diagnostic samples submitted to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, U.S., in November 2007, according to a 2010 article in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*.

Previously documented Bundibugyo outbreaks have reportedly had case fatality rates of 30% and 50% – more or less the same fatality rate as the more common Zaire ebolavirus strain that caused havoc in Africa between 2014 and 2016. While this has caused fears that the virus is probably as deadly, the extra concern is because the outbreak has started in a conflict-ridden area, making case detection and contact tracing difficult and access to care uneven.

As of May 21, 2016, a total of 83 confirmed cases, including nine deaths, and 746 suspected cases, including 176 deaths, have been reported from 15 health zones in the DRC. Four health worker deaths have been reported to date. An American national who was working in the DRC as a surgeon has also been confirmed to have Ebola, reportedly having been exposed to the virus during a procedure he performed on May 11. He is being treated in isolation in Germany.

Similar symptoms

According to an article in the *Scientific American*, the symptoms of an infection with the Bundibugyo virus resemble those of other orthoebolaviruses. Early on, they include an intense headache, high fever, body ache and fatigue. This is known as the “dry symptoms”, but as the infection progresses, people can develop “wet symptoms” or intense vomiting and diarrhoea, which can become

life-threatening. It further says: the viruses are also known to cause hemorrhagic fever, infecting specific immune cells and triggering a massive inflammatory response that can lead to internal bleeding and organ failure.

Efforts are in place to improve identification of persons with suspected infection, trace their contacts, contain the spread of infection and make sure that everyone with the symptoms receives appropriate care at a health facility.

Meanwhile, the WHO has raised the public risk from the Ebola outbreak in DRC from ‘high’ to ‘very high’. The scheduled India-Africa Forum Summit has been cancelled due to the ongoing crisis. British media has reported that scientists at Oxford University are working on developing a new vaccine to tackle the Bundibugyo strain, and that it might be ready for clinical trials in two or three months. Additionally, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, a global partnership working to accelerate the development of vaccines and other biologicals, has claimed that it is working at pace with partners, including Africa CDC, WHO and national authorities, to identify opportunities to rapidly advance vaccine development.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Bundibugyo ebolavirus (BDBV):** One of six identified species within the *Orthoebolavirus* genus. It is a zoonotic virus (transmissible from animals to humans) that causes severe, often fatal viral hemorrhagic fever in humans. Unlike the more common *Zaire ebolavirus*, BDBV has historically been rare, making targeted medical countermeasures scarce.

- **Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC):** The highest formal alert level that can be issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) under the **International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005)**. It denotes an extraordinary event that constitutes a public health risk to other states through international spread and potentially requires a coordinated international response. Examples include COVID-19, Zika, and Polio.

- **Orthoebolavirus:** The newly updated scientific genus classification for Ebola viruses. These are filamentous, single-stranded RNA viruses belonging to the *Filoviridae* family.

- **Viral Hemorrhagic Fever (VHF):** A diverse group of animal and human illnesses caused by four distinct families of RNA viruses. They are characterized by fever, diffuse vascular damage, coagulation defects, and multi-organ failure.

- **Case Fatality Rate (CFR):** The proportion of people who die from a specified disease among all individuals diagnosed with the disease over a certain period. For Bundibugyo, the CFR historically ranges between 30% and 50%.

- **Contact Tracing:** The epidemiological process of identifying, assessing, and managing people who have been exposed to a contagious disease to prevent onward transmission.

- **Dry vs. Wet Symptoms:** A clinical distinction used in managing Ebola patients. "Dry" symptoms dominate the early phase (fever, intense headache, myalgia), while "wet" symptoms characterize the advanced gastrointestinal phase (severe diarrhea, projectile vomiting), which poses a massive risk for environmental contamination and fluid depletion.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The unfolding public health crisis centers on several core arguments that reflect the structural vulnerabilities of global health governance:
- **The Compounding Risk of Conflict Zones:** The primary epidemiological challenge is not just the virulence of the Bundibugyo strain, but its geographic intersection with active conflict zones along the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda border. Armed conflict fundamentally disrupts **surveillance architecture**, limits the physical mobility of contact-tracing teams, and creates systemic distrust between local communities and state-led health interventions.
- **Proactive Global Governance vs. Bureaucratic Delays:** The WHO's decision to bypass conventional consultation processes to declare a PHEIC reflects a profound paradigm shift. It highlights a realization that waiting for consensus in the face of an agile pathogen often guarantees catastrophic geometric spread. This unilateral speed underscores a "firefighting" model of international governance.
- **The Therapeutic Vacuum:** While the global community successfully developed vaccines (like Ervebo) for the *Zaire ebolavirus* strain post-2014, the *Bundibugyo* strain remains effectively neglected. This showcases the reactive nature of global pharmaceutical research and development, which prioritizes commercial viability or immediate high-volume threats over comprehensive protection against rare pathogens.
- **The Vulnerability of Healthcare Systems:** The infection and death of frontline healthcare workers, including specialized surgical staff, emphasizes that nosocomial (hospital-acquired) transmission remains a weak link. Standard surgical and medical procedures can inadvertently become super-spreader events if infection control infrastructure is sub-optimal.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The trajectory of Ebola outbreaks and the international frameworks designed to contain them have undergone a major shift over the last few decades:
- **Pre-2000s (The Era of Geographical Naming):** Pathogens were historically named after the locations where they were first isolated (e.g., the Ebola River in DRC, Marburg in Germany, Lassa in Nigeria). This convention often stigmatized regions, leading to economic and social fallout, which eventually prompted the WHO to adopt non-stigmatizing nomenclature guidelines.
- **2007 (Discovery of Bundibugyo):** A mysterious outbreak in the Bundibugyo district of Western Uganda led to the isolation of a unique, fifth species of Ebola virus by the CDC. The outbreak exhibited a CFR of approximately 30%.
- **2012 (The Second Wave):** A localized outbreak occurred in the Orientale Province of the DRC, confirming that the Bundibugyo strain possessed a geographic reservoir extending across the dense equatorial forests of Central Africa.
- **2014–2016 (The West African Turning Point):** The catastrophic Zaire strain outbreak in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone forced the global community to re-engineer its response. It led to the creation of the **Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)** and the fast-tracking of viral vector vaccines, though these innovations did not extend cross-protection to the Bundibugyo strain.
- **2026 (The Present Crisis):** The current multi-country outbreak marks the third historical appearance of BDBV. It is characterized by unprecedented structural integration between regional bodies (Africa CDC), global coalitions (CEPI), and accelerated clinical trial designs aimed at testing candidate vaccines within a tight two-to-three-month window.

- **Way Forward**

- To move from reactive containment to a proactive, sustainable strategy, structural reforms must be implemented:

- **Operationalizing "Health as a Bridge for Peace" (HBP):** In conflict zones like the eastern DRC, traditional top-down medical interventions often fail. International organizations must deploy humanitarian health corridors, negotiating temporary medical ceasefires with non-state armed actors. This approach ensures safe passage for contact-tracing teams and neutralizes health delivery as a political tool.

- **Diversifying Multi-Valent Vaccine Platforms:** Pharmaceutical research must pivot away from monovalent vaccines that target only a single viral strain. Investing in broad-spectrum multi-valent platforms that cover the *Zaire*, *Sudan*, and *Bundibugyo* strains simultaneously will create an embedded layer of biological readiness, neutralizing threats before they erupt into epidemics.

- **Decentralizing Manufacturing to the Africa CDC:** The Global South cannot remain entirely dependent on Western supply chains for life-saving therapeutics. Financial and technology transfers must be directed to regional hubs under the Africa CDC framework, enabling the localized manufacturing of mRNA and viral-vector countermeasures directly on the continent.

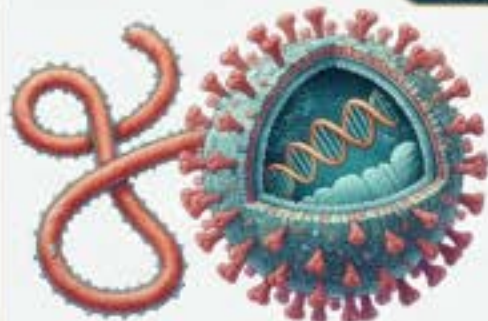
- **Strengthening Community-Led Surveillance Architecture:** Instead of relying solely on international emergency deployments, investment should prioritize training trusted local community health workers. Integrating surveillance into everyday local leadership, such as the Bwamba Kingdom infrastructure, helps bypass institutional distrust, facilitates early detection, and ensures culturally respectful containment.



GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY: BUNDIBUGYO EBOLAVIRUS OUTBREAK ANALYSIS

FOR UPSC CSE PREPARATION | AXIA IAS ACADEMY

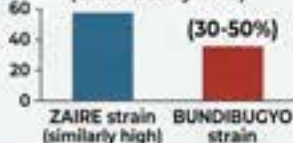
THE PATHOGEN



BUNDIBUGYO EBOLAVIRUS (BDBV)

- Origins: 2007 outbreak, Bundibugyo dist., Uganda
- Place-based naming convention (now less common)

CFR COMPARISON (Case Fatality Rate)



SYMPTOMS & PATHOPHYSIOLOGY

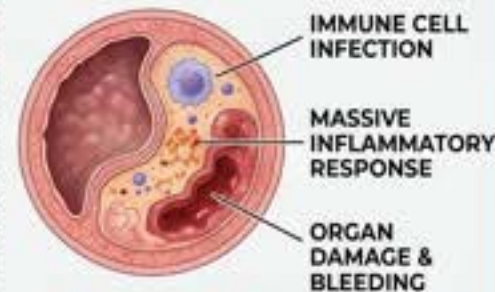
STAGE 1: DRY SYMPTOMS (early)

- Intense Headache
- High Fever
- Body Ache
- Fatigue



STAGE 2: WET SYMPTOMS (advanced)

- Severe Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Internal Hemorrhaging
- Organ Failure



THE CRISIS IN CONTEXT

Data as of MAY 21, 2026

DRC OUTBREAK SNAPSHOT
Confirmed Cases: 83 | Deaths: 9
Suspected Cases: 746 | Deaths: 176



AMERICAN NATIONAL EXPOSED



INDIA-AFRICA FORUM SUMMIT CANCELLED due to crisis

4 HEALTHCARE WORKER DEATHS

CONFLICT-RIDDEN AREA HAMPERING CARE AND TRACING

GOVERNANCE & RISK MANAGEMENT



WHO PHEIC DECLARATION

UNUSUAL ALACRITY: Bypassing Conventional Expert Consultations

PUBLIC HEALTH

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY OF INTERNATIONAL CONCERN (PHEIC)



RISK-O-METER Risk in DRC raised from to VERY HIGH

THE THERAPEUTIC VACUUM & EFFORTS

NO CURRENT VACCINES | NO SPECIFIC THERAPIES

FAST-TRACK EFFORTS



OXFORD VACCINE EFFORTS: New vaccine tackling Bundibugyo strain (Ready for clinical trials in 2-3 months)



CEPI COLLABORATION with Africa CDC, WHO, and national authorities to advance vaccine development



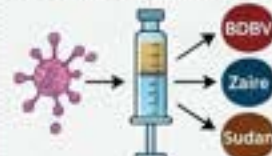
SUSTAINABLE WAY FORWARD

HEALTH AS A BRIDGE TO PEACE (HBP)



Peaceful village to a peaceful village

MULTI-VALENT VACCINE PLATFORMS



One vaccine covering multiple strain strains (BDBV, e.g., Sudan)

DECENTRALIZED MANUFACTURING



Africa CDC manufacturing

COMMUNITY-LED SURVEILLANCE



Community-Led, emphasising trust, cultural respect, and local capacity building

Nifty 50's long-term historical performance reassures FPIs 'don't write me off just yet'

NOT DOWN & OUT. While it is wise to acknowledge current challenges, it is important to not throw out the baby with the bathwater

Dhuraivel Gunasekaran
bl research bureau

When times are tough, it gets even tougher when compared with better-performing players. Indian markets are exactly in that spot today, as demanding valuations, impact on earnings growth from geopolitical turmoil, lack of good AI plays, and currency depreciation push them closer to the bottom of the pile in terms of FPI preference.

In dollar-denominated returns, South Korea's Kospi is up a staggering 171 per cent in the last one year, Taiwan's benchmark index TWSE is up 81 per cent, Brazil's Ibovespa is up 45 per cent and the S&P 500 is up 27 per cent. Against this backdrop, the Nifty 50's negative 15.3 per cent dollar-denominated returns over the past year make it appear like a clear under-performer.

But what if investors move beyond the T20 timeframe and shift to a Test match ho-

riзон? The perspectives change a lot.

A *bl portfolio* analysis of five-year dollar-denominated returns across major global indices indicates that while current challenges are real — and there could be more pain ahead — the Nifty 50's long-term consistency suggests that, after a valuation reset and a turn in the cycle, the timing of which remains uncertain, better days could return. That is why it is important not to throw the baby out with the bathwater.

CONSISTENCY INTACT

When measured through five-year rolling returns over the past decade, India remains among the stronger-performing markets globally.

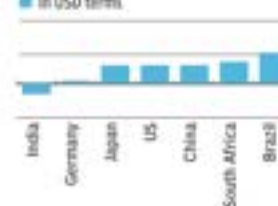
The Nifty 50 has delivered 10.3 per cent annualised returns (average) in dollar terms positioning it favourably relative to most peers. Only the S&P 500 (12.3 per cent) and Taiwan (12.1 per cent) outperform India in dollar terms, while key markets such as China (1.1 per

Dollar blues, but compounding intact

Performance over the last one year*

(% return)

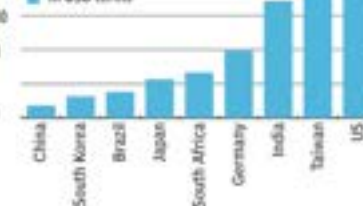
■ In USD terms



Performance based on 5-year rolling returns**

(Average CAGR %)

■ In USD terms



India fares well in return stability and lower downside risk

Distribution of five-year rolling returns in USD terms (%)

Return range	India	US	China	Japan	South Africa	Brazil	Taiwan	South Korea	Germany
Negative returns	0	0	29	20	25	38	0	36	11
0% to 5%	3	0	70	43	42	11	3	42	23
5% to 10%	43	25	1	38	13	18	25	18	42
10% to 20%	53	75	0	0	20	10	72	4	21
Above 20%	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

cent), Japan (3.4 per cent) and Brazil (2.3 per cent) lag significantly despite having outperformed India over the past year.

The distribution analysis of five-year rolling returns in dollar terms, which captures both return potential and downside risk, further high-

lights India's relative strength.

NO NEGATIVE RETURN

The data reveal that India has recorded no negative five-year rolling returns, placing it in a select group alongside the S&P 500 and Taiwan's TWSE. A majority of obser-

ventions fall within the 10-20 per cent annualised return band (53 per cent), with a further 43 per cent in the 5-10 per cent range. This points to a high degree of return stability and predictability, with limited exposure to extreme outcomes on either the upside or downside. In

contrast, several emerging markets exhibit significantly less favourable return distributions. Brazil, for instance, recorded negative returns in 38 per cent of the observations, while South Korea and China also displayed high frequencies of suboptimal outcomes.

Even developed markets such as Germany and Japan showed a more dispersed return profile, particularly on the lower side of the return spectrum.

These comparisons highlight a key attribute of Indian equities: consistent long-term compounding rather than sporadic bursts of high performance.

VOLATILITY ISSUE

Further, annualised standard deviation data highlights the volatility profile of major global markets. India's volatility, at 19.1 per cent, was higher than that of the US and Japan, but lower than most emerging markets such as South Korea, Brazil and Taiwan.

The takeaway is straightforward: while near-term volatility may persist amid evolving global macroeconomic conditions, the longer-term data reinforces India's position as a relatively stable and consistent wealth creator.

This is perhaps something FPIs already understand, having entered, exited and re-entered India multiple times over the years. What domestic investors need to recognise is that while FII re-entry may be inevitable, the timing may not align with market expectations. Several prominent Indian fund managers have already made predictions on this front that have failed badly.

A number of other factors will need to fall into place before sustained foreign inflows return. While it is prudent to acknowledge current challenges and position investments accordingly, it would be equally unwise to write off the India story based solely on one-year performance headlines.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI):** This refers to investments made by non-residents in domestic financial assets, primarily equities (shares) and bonds. Unlike Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), which involves direct control and long-term business setup, FPI is relatively liquid and moves based on market returns. Think of it as global mutual funds buying shares in prominent domestic companies.

- **Dollar-Denominated Returns:** This is the profit or loss of an investment calculated in US Dollars rather than the local currency (like the Indian Rupee). For a foreign investor, if the local market grows by 10% but the local currency depreciates by 5% against the dollar, their actual return is significantly lower. It represents the true yield for global investors.

- **Rolling Returns:** Instead of looking at point-to-point returns (e.g., January 1 to December 31), rolling returns measure annualized average returns over a specific timeframe (like a 5-year block) rolled forward daily or monthly. This eliminates the bias of specific entry or exit dates and provides a highly accurate picture of an asset's historical consistency.

- **Market Volatility (Standard Deviation):** In finance, this measures how much an investment's returns fluctuate over time. High volatility indicates a bumpy ride with potential for steep losses or sharp gains, while lower volatility indicates a steadier, more predictable compounding of wealth.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis revolves around the interplay between short-term market turbulence and long-term wealth compounding.

- **The Illusion of Short-Term Pain:** Emerging markets frequently experience short-term capital flight due to global macroeconomic headwinds, geopolitical tensions, or high domestic valuations. During these cycles, certain markets may appear to underperform globally, pushing them down the preference ladder for foreign investors.

- **The Power of Consistency:** When measured over extended horizons—such as five to ten years—fundamentally strong emerging economies transition from speculative trading grounds to consistent wealth creators. The underlying argument is that steady compounding, free from extreme negative downward spirals, is ultimately more lucrative than sporadic bursts of high performance in highly volatile markets.

- **Downside Risk Mitigation:** A crucial substantive point is that mature emerging markets tend to exhibit a tighter distribution of returns. This means the probability of experiencing negative returns over a long-term rolling period drops significantly, creating a "safe harbor" effect within the normally risky emerging market basket.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The integration of domestic capital markets with global financial flows has been a gradual, policy-driven journey.
- **Pre-1991 (The Closed Era):** Prior to the liberalization reforms, domestic markets were highly insulated. Capital allocation was heavily state-controlled through the Controller of Capital Issues (CCI), and foreign portfolio investment was practically non-existent.
- **1991 to 2000s (Liberalization and Institutionalization):** The Balance of Payments crisis forced open the economy. The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) was given statutory powers in 1992, creating a safer regulatory environment. The doors were officially opened to Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs), bringing crucial dollar liquidity to a capital-starved economy.
- **2014 to Present (Harmonization and Maturation):** To simplify regulations and ease compliance, various classes of foreign investors (FIIs, Sub-accounts, and Qualified Foreign Investors) were merged into a single Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) category. Today, the market operates on highly advanced T+1 settlement cycles, reflecting deep structural maturation.

- **Way Forward**

- To cement a position as a premier destination for global capital, policymakers must adopt a multi-pronged, forward-looking approach.
- **Deepening the Corporate Bond Market:** Over-reliance on equity markets creates volatility. By deepening the corporate and sovereign bond markets, emerging economies can attract long-term, stable capital from global pension funds and insurance companies.
- **Macroeconomic Prudence:** Central banks must actively manage foreign exchange reserves to prevent sharp, disruptive currency depreciations, ensuring that dollar-denominated returns remain attractive. Simultaneous efforts to control domestic inflation are non-negotiable.
- **Easing Compliance and Taxation:** Regulatory bodies should continue transitioning towards a highly digitized, friction-free compliance regime for foreign investors, ensuring tax policies are predictable, transparent, and completely devoid of retrospective applicability.



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CAPITAL MARKETS: SHORT-TERM VOLATILITY, LONG-TERM WEALTH CREATION

Why Steady Compounding in Emerging Markets Triumphs Over Short-Term Turbulence

A Conceptual Analysis for Deep Understanding & UPSC Perspective

“ In capital markets, it is not the sprint, but the marathon that creates generational wealth. ”

Think Long Term
Compounding
Rewards Patience

Manage Risk Wisely
Lower Volatility,
Higher Reliability

Focus on Fundamentals
Strong Economies Create
Sustainable Returns

Stay Invested
Time is the Market
Beats Timing the Market

1. KEY TERMS & EXPLANATIONS

- Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI):** Investments by non-residents in domestic financial assets like equities & bonds. More liquid than FDI and driven by market returns.
- Dollar-Denominated Returns:** Returns calculated in US Dollars. Reflects true yield for global investors after accounting for currency movements.
- Rolling Returns:** Annualized average returns over a specific timeframe (e.g., 5-year block) rolled forward daily or monthly. Eliminates entry/exit bias.
- Market Volatility (Standard Deviation):** Measures the fluctuation in returns. High volatility = bumpy ride; Low volatility = steady compounding.

2. MAIN ARGUMENTS

- Illusion of Short-Term Pain:** Global headwinds, geopolitical tensions, or high valuations trigger short-term capital flight & underperformance.
- Power of Consistency:** Over 5-10 years, strong emerging economies deliver consistent wealth creation through steady compounding.
- Downside Risk Mitigation:** Mature emerging markets show a tighter distribution of returns, reducing the probability of long-term negative outcomes.

3. ROLLING 5-YEAR RETURNS (USD) – EMERGING MARKETS



4. HISTORICAL EVOLUTION IN INDIA

- Pre-1991 (The Closed Era):** Heavily regulated markets, CCI controlled capital allocation. FPI practically non-existent.
- 1991 – 2000s (Liberalization & Institutionalization):** Economic reforms opened doors. SEBI got statutory powers (1992). FPIs brought much-needed dollar liquidity.
- 2014 – Present (Harmonization & Maturation):** Unified FPI framework (merging FII, Sub-accounts, QFII). Advanced systems, T+1 settlement cycles, deeper & more resilient markets.

5. LOGICAL & PHILOSOPHICAL BASE

- Time Preference & Delayed Gratification:** True wealth needs patience. Those who stay invested through short-term stocks are rewarded by long-term economic growth.
 - Risk-Adjusted Utility:** Rational capital seeks returns adjusted for risk. Stable 10% with low volatility > 20% one year and -10% the next.
- “ The investor mindset looks beyond the noise; the speculator reacts to every storm. ”

6. NEW FEATURES & UNIQUE IDEAS

- Currency-Adjusted Competitiveness:** Evaluating markets through dollar returns highlights the impact of inflation & currency depreciation on investor attractiveness.
- Probability Distribution of Returns:** Focus on the frequency of positive return bands (e.g., 10-20%) rather than just average returns. India has the highest probability of being in positive high-return bands.
- Downside Deviation Matters:** Lower probability of extreme negative returns makes a market a safe harbor within the emerging market basket.

7. KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Short-term volatility is the price of long-term prosperity.
- Consistent compounding in stable emerging markets builds wealth more reliably.
- India stands out as a market of choice for global investors seeking growth with stability.
- Time in the market, backed by strong fundamentals, creates true wealth.



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“ Don't just chase returns, build a legacy with time, wisdom & discipline. ”





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