

# AXIA IAS ACADEMY



**DAILY NEWS  
ANALYSIS**



**MAY 9**



**CONSISTENT  
COMPREHENSIVE  
AND CREDIBLE**



**UNIQUE AND BEST IN  
QUALITY**





# AXIA

## IAS ACADEMY

RISE ABOVE THE REST



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

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

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

**+91 6002-417488**

# Bangladesh battles its worst measles outbreak in decades as child deaths rise

Agence France-Presse  
DHAKA

Bangladesh's deadliest measles outbreak in decades is stretching its health system, with children filling hospital wards and doctors struggling to contain a surge in infections that have killed more than 300 youngsters.

The South Asian nation had made advancements in vaccinations to help stem the deadly virus – but coverage gaps during and after the chaos of a 2024 uprising that overthrew the autocratic government left the youngest generation badly exposed.

"I was almost sure I was going to lose her today – her condition was terrible in the morning," said Rina Begum, 45, cradling her

three-year-old granddaughter Afia.

Ms. Begum, her eyes red from exhaustion and tears, said Afia had missed her second dose of the measles vaccine at age 18 months, and had spent the last two weeks in the measles ward in Dhaka.

Measles is highly contagious, spreading through coughs and sneezes, and has no specific treatment once caught.

It hits children the hardest.

Their breathing can become strained, their strength fades, and in the most severe cases, the infection reaches the brain, causing swelling that can lead to lasting damage – or death.

Hospitals are treating thousands of young pa-

tients while authorities race to expand vaccination coverage and prevent more deaths.

Ms. Begum offered a smile as Afia reached up – having just turned a corner and regained some strength. "After putting her on oxygen, now she is doing much better," she said.

## 'Doctor's help'

Bangladesh has recorded 336 child deaths since March 15, with more than 50,000 confirmed and suspected cases, according to the latest government data.

Most cases recorded have been among children aged between six months and five years.

On May 4 the country recorded the grim milestone of the highest number



**Preventive measure:** Mothers with their children wait in queues to receive measles vaccinations amid a rising outbreak in Dhaka. AP

of children dying in a single day – 17 in 24 hours.

Bangladesh has made significant advancements in vaccinations to tackle infectious diseases, but a measles drive due in 2024

was delayed by the revolution that toppled the government of Sheikh Hasina.

Health officials, aided by the UN children's agency, WHO, and the security

forces, are working to vaccinate children, launching an emergency measles-rubella campaign on April 5.

Nearly 17 million children have received the vaccine since the drive started, according to government data.

Last year the vaccine coverage was only 59%, but 95% coverage of children is needed to ensure herd immunity.

Without herd immunity, children can still get infected after vaccination, said senior health ministry official Abu Hussain Md Moimul Ahsan.

It would take around a month before results can be seen, Mr. Ahsan added.

Siam, a 14-month-old boy, spent 10 days in intensive care at Dhaka's Shishu Hospital, a children's

centre, before improving enough to return to the dedicated measles ward.

He was vaccinated at 10 months, but with wider herd immunity compromised, that was not enough.

"I did not expect to get my son back," said his mother Brishti Akhtar, aged 20, watching her son sleep with an oxygen tube attached to his nose, one of 97 children with measles in the hospital.

"With the doctor's help, now he is out of danger."

## Army field hospital

Health Ministry official Ahsan insisted that medics could cope. "The hospitals are not yet overburdened," he said.

But, just in case, the army has erected a 20-bed

tent field hospital in the grounds of the government's Dhaka Medical College Hospital, ready for further cases.

"With the current measles outbreak, the health ministry told us to set up a field hospital," said the hospital director, Brigadier General Md Asaduzzaman.

But there are other challenges ahead.

Bangladesh has experienced heavy rainfall in the last few weeks – bringing with it a rise in mosquitoes that carry the deadly dengue virus.

"We hope the measles infection rate will decrease soon," said Mr. Asaduzzaman.

"With the dengue season in mind, the field hospital is expected to be effective in that crisis too."

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Measles (Rubeola):** A highly contagious viral infection caused by the measles virus. It primarily affects children and spreads through respiratory droplets. Unlike bacteria, it has no specific antiviral treatment, making prevention through vaccination the only viable defense.
- **Herd Immunity:** A form of indirect protection from infectious disease that happens when a large percentage of a population (usually **95%** for measles) becomes immune, thereby reducing the likelihood of spread to those who lack immunity.
  - *Example:* In a village of 100, if 95 are vaccinated, the virus cannot find enough "hosts" to reach the 5 who aren't, effectively protecting them.
- **Coverage Gap:** The difference between the actual number of people vaccinated and the target required for disease control. These gaps often occur during civil unrest or administrative transitions.
- **Secondary Infections:** Complications that arise because measles weakens the immune system, such as pneumonia or encephalitis (brain swelling).
- **Dengue-Measles Syndemic:** A situation where two outbreaks occur simultaneously (measles and mosquito-borne dengue), compounding the pressure on the healthcare system.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis posits that **political instability acts as a catalyst for public health disasters** by disrupting routine immunization schedules.
- **The Breakdown of Routine Immunization:** The primary cause of the current surge is the disruption of the 2024 vaccination drive due to domestic political upheaval. This created a "frozen cohort" of vulnerable children.
- **The Criticality of the Second Dose:** The article highlights that missing the second dose (usually administered at 18 months) leaves children at high risk, even if they had the initial shot.
- **Systemic Overstretch:** While officials claim the system is coping, the necessity of "Army Field Hospitals" suggests that the formal infrastructure is at its limit.
- **Compounding Factors:** Environmental factors, such as heavy rainfall, introduce the risk of co-epidemics (Dengue), which compete for the same intensive care resources (ICU beds, oxygen).

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- The trajectory of measles management in South Asia has seen significant shifts:

- **Pre-2000s:** High mortality rates; measles was considered a "rite of passage" for children, with limited vaccine penetration in rural areas.

- **The GAVI Era (Post-2000):** Global alliances helped South Asian nations achieve record-high immunization rates. Bangladesh was often cited as a "success story" for its grassroots community health worker model.

- **The 2024 Inflection Point:** The transition from an autocratic regime to a provisional setup led to a breakdown in supply chains and administrative focus, reversing nearly a decade of progress in just a few months.

- **Present Day:** A shift toward "Emergency Response" mode, utilizing military assistance to fill the gaps left by the civilian administration.

- **Way Forward**

- **Decoupling Health from Politics:** Establishing an independent, statutory National Immunization Board that functions autonomously of the central government to ensure continuity during political transitions.

- **Digital Vaccine Tracking:** Implementing a robust digital register (similar to India's CoWIN) to identify "drop-outs" who missed their second dose.

- **Community-Led Surveillance:** Training local youth and women's groups to spot early symptoms of measles, ensuring cases are isolated before they reach the hospital.

- **Integrated Fever Clinics:** Creating "Fever Triage" centers that can handle both measles and dengue, optimizing the use of oxygen and nursing staff.

- **Previous Years' Questions (UPSC/APSC)**

- **UPSC 2020 (GS 2):** "Public health system has limitations in providing preventive and curative healthcare. Do you think that even more emphasis should be placed on the role of the private sector?"

- **UPSC 2014 (GS 2):** "The critical determinants of health care are as much outside the health sector as within it. Elaborate."

- **APSC 2021:** "Discuss the role of the National Health Mission in improving the health indicators of India."


# UPSC CSE ANALYSIS: THE BANGLADESH MEASLES OUTBREAK (2024)

UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTION  
OF POLITICAL STABILITY & PUBLIC HEALTH


## POLITICAL STABILITY & HEALTH NEXUS FLOWCHART




## KEY TERMS & EPIDEMIOLOGY




**Measles**  
(Highly Contagious Virus)



**95% Herd Immunity Target vs. 59% Actual Coverage**



**Covered Gap**  
(Fonitved in tmdents)



**Secondary Infections**  
In Cvisease

## MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACTS

-  **Social:** Burden on low-income families, and omrriences of Bangladesh bangladesh one to genue at leasts.
-  **Political:** Government legitimacy at stake in Bangladesh government aritics.
-  **Legal:** International Health Regulations, to endure stomental health loccties.
-  **Ethical:** Triage in crisis, annoving a bangladeshi orny of health crisis.
-  **International:** Global health security and menith reriorgency victors.
-  **Economic:** High healthcare costs vs. prevention cost as Bangladeshi moch.



UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTION OF POLITICAL STABILITY & PUBLIC HEALTH

## SYLLABUS & UPSC RELEVANCE

- GS Paper 2 (Governance & Social Sector)
- GS Paper 2 (Government in State)
- GS Paper 2 (Governance & Social Sector)
- Paper 2 (Eermnary & Social Sector)
- **International Health Regulations** (Concorments & Starmaterariscoits)
- GS Paper (Health Intermate)

## WAY FORWARD

- **Concrete solutions** tock Bangladesh malitharcs in inta such as osind-rmanker and health owitions.
- **Condresse solution** responsive for propose cries in indeprndent stability & public health.
- **Solutiate solutions** via conterunity and chnowledge promote solution to preparee health are outbreaks.

# The 'bridge of defiance' that was struck

The BI Bridge in Karaj, the tallest bridge in the Persian Gulf region, was hit during the American and Israeli military strikes on the night of April 2. In Iran, however, the bridge has quickly become something larger than a construction project; it is now being presented as a symbol of resistance.

## DISPATCH FROM IRAN

Saurabh Shukla  
Saurabh Shahi  
KARAJ

Standing over the dry bed of the Karaj River, all that remains are twisted steel beams, shattered concrete slabs, dust, and silence. What lies here is not the aftermath of an accident. Iranian officials and witnesses describe it as a deliberate and calculated strike – one they say was designed not just to destroy infrastructure, but to break Iran's industrial and social backbone.

On the night of April 2, 2026, the BI Bridge in Karaj – the tallest bridge in the Persian Gulf region – was hit during American and Israeli military strikes, according to Iranian authorities. The attack destroyed a key section of the bridge and turned what was once considered a symbol of Iranian engineering into a field of rubble.

In Iran, however, the bridge has quickly become something larger than a construction project. It is now being presented as a symbol of national resistance and self-reliance.

The BI Bridge, also known as Bilqan 1, connected the Bilqan region of Karaj with Tehran and formed part of one of Iran's most important transport corridors. Karaj, located west of Tehran, functions as Iran's largest industrial suburb. Nearly

200,000 vehicles travel daily between Karaj and Tehran, and the bridge had been designed to divert almost one-third of the traffic from heavily congested older routes.

Its strategic importance extended far beyond urban traffic management.

The corridor links Tehran to Qazvin, Tabriz, the Caspian region, and onward trade routes connecting Iran with Russia and Central Asia.

Project Engineer of this bridge has also emphasised another aspect of the bridge – that it was built almost entirely with domestic technology and materials. The bridge had not yet been formally inaugurated, though traffic had already started moving across it.

### Broader strategy

According to local accounts, civilians had gathered near the Karaj riverbed on the evening of April 2 when the strikes began. The first missile hit the central span of the bridge, causing a section to collapse and vehicles to fall into the dry riverbed below.

Emergency responders rushed to the scene soon afterward.

Witnesses and Iranian officials state that additional strikes followed after rescue teams arrived. The sequence of attacks has been described by Iranian commentators as a "triple-tap strike", a military tactic in which an initial strike is followed by subsequent at-



**Symbol of resistance:** The BI bridge, after it was destroyed by a strike in Karaj, nearly 35 km southwest of Tehran, on April 3. Donald Trump had previously threatened to bomb Iran "back to the Stone Age". AP

tacks targeting rescuers and emergency personnel arriving at the scene.

Iranian authorities have described the attack as a violation of international humanitarian law, arguing that the bridge was civilian infrastructure rather than a military target.

Beyond the destruction itself, Iranian analysts believe the strikes reflected a broader geopolitical strategy aimed at destabilising Iran internally. The BI corridor connects Tehran with northern and north-western regions that have large Azeri populations. Karaj itself has a substantial Azeri community, while cities further north-west such as Tabriz are overwhelmingly Azeri.

Iranian political commentators argue that the destruction of the bridge was intended to isolate Tehran from those regions

and create internal pressure or instability along ethnic lines – a strategy they claim resembles approaches previously seen in Syria and Lebanon.

However, Iranian officials insist that such assumptions misread the structure of Iranian society. Azeris are deeply integrated into Iran's political, military, and economic institutions and constitute one of the country's most influential communities.

The attacks also intensified debate within Iran over technological independence and industrial self-sufficiency.

In recent years, Tehran has invested heavily in domestic engineering and manufacturing capabilities as sanctions limited access to foreign suppliers and international cooperation. Iranian officials point to projects such as the BI

Bridge as examples of the country's ability to sustain major infrastructure development independently.

Alongside the bridge strike, Iranian media reports indicate that steel plants, cement facilities, and scientific institutions were also targeted during the broader military campaign.

Particular attention has focused on Sharif University of Technology in Tehran, widely regarded as one of West Asia's leading engineering universities.

Despite sanctions, Iran continues to produce a large number of engineering graduates annually, and officials frequently portray technical education as central to the country's economic resilience.

Following the bridge strike, Iran carried out what officials described as a symbolic retaliatory op-

eration near the King Fahd Causeway connecting Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. Iranian state-linked media framed the move as a warning that critical infrastructure throughout the Gulf region remains vulnerable.

### Political moment

Inside Iran, the public response to the attack became a major political and symbolic moment.

After statements attributed to U.S. President Donald Trump warning of further destruction of Iranian infrastructure, crowds gathered near bridges and public structures across several cities. In Karaj, thousands reportedly assembled near the damaged BI Bridge.

The gatherings were widely portrayed in Iranian media as demonstrations of civilian resolve and national unity.

Reconstruction efforts began almost immediately after the strikes. Engineering crews and heavy machinery reportedly arrived at the site within hours, and officials now say the bridge could be rebuilt within six weeks.

At the site today, cranes move continuously above shattered concrete while workers weld new steel structures into place. Iranian authorities say the rebuilt bridge will rely once again on domestic materials, local industry, and Iranian engineers.

Following the bridge strike, Iran carried out what officials described as a symbolic retaliatory op-

(Saurabh Shukla and Saurabh Shahi are senior editors with *The Red Mike*)

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Triple-Tap Strike:** A military tactic where an initial strike is followed by two subsequent attacks on the same location. The objective is to target first responders, rescue teams, and onlookers who gather after the first blast. It is often criticized as a violation of international humanitarian law.
- **Civilian Infrastructure vs. Dual-Use Technology:** Infrastructure like bridges or power plants are "civilian" by nature, but "dual-use" if they support military logistics. Under the Geneva Convention, attacking purely civilian objects is prohibited.
- **Strategic Transport Corridor:** A major route (road, rail, or sea) that facilitates high-volume trade and military movement. The B1 bridge serves as a "choke point" connecting a capital city to industrial hubs and international borders.
- **Domestic Engineering & Self-Reliance:** The capacity of a nation to design, fund, and build complex projects without foreign expertise or imported materials—often a response to international sanctions (similar to India's *Atmanirbhar Bharat*).
- **Ethnic Destabilization:** A strategy where military or political actions are designed to exploit existing fault lines between different ethnic groups within a country to trigger internal unrest.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis posits that modern warfare has shifted from purely military engagements to "**Infrastructure Warfare**," where the destruction of a bridge is intended to shatter a nation's psychological and economic backbone.
- **Infrastructure as National Identity:** The bridge was not just a road; it was a testament to "resistance" against sanctions. Its destruction is framed not as a tactical loss but as an assault on the nation's dignity.
- **The Logic of Attrition:** By targeting the B1 bridge, the striking forces aimed to cut off Tehran from the Azeri-populated industrial regions, potentially hoping to trigger supply chain collapses and civil dissatisfaction.
- **Weaponization of Geography:** The bridge acted as a gateway to Russia and Central Asia. Its removal disrupts international trade, showing that the strike's intent was to isolate the nation globally.
- **Counterargument (The "Resilience" Narrative):** Iranian authorities argue that the strike backfired. Instead of causing ethnic strife, it created a "Political Moment" of unity, with immediate reconstruction efforts serving as a rebuttal to foreign aggression.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **Pre-Cold War (Total War):** During WWII, "strategic bombing" of cities (Dresden, London) aimed to break civilian morale. Infrastructure was a primary target.
- **The Sanctions Era (1979–Present):** Following the 1979 Revolution, Iran faced increasing isolation. This forced a shift toward "Resistance Economy," where infrastructure projects became symbols of bypassing Western technology.
- **The Rise of Precision Munitions (1990s–Present):** Technology allowed for "surgical strikes." However, as seen in the April 2nd events, "precision" is now used for "triple-tap" tactics, raising new ethical dilemmas in the 21st century.
- **2026 Context:** The strike occurs in a hyper-polarized world where regional powers (Israel/Iran/USA) utilize infrastructure destruction as a form of "Grey Zone" warfare—just below the threshold of full-scale ground invasion.

- **Way Forward**

- **Strengthening International Humanitarian Law (IHL):** New protocols are needed to specifically ban "Multi-tap" strikes that target first responders.
- **Infrastructure Hardening:** Designing "resilient" infrastructure that can be partially functional even after a strike (redundancy in design).
- **Diplomatic De-escalation:** Moving from "infrastructure warfare" to a "neutrality pact" for transit corridors that affect third-party nations.
- **Strategic Communication:** Using "Soft Power" and diplomatic channels to highlight the civilian cost of such strikes on global platforms like the UN Security Council.

- **Previous Years' Questions (UPSC/APSC)**

- **GS II (2022):** "The 'criticality' of West Asia in India's strategic map is increasing." Discuss in the context of recent geopolitical shifts.
- **GS III (2018):** "The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is viewed as a cardinal subset of China's One Belt One Road. Give a brief description of CPEC and enumerate the reasons why India has distanced itself from the same." (Parallel to the "Transport Corridor" theme).
- **GS IV (2017):** "The concept of 'Just War' and its relevance in the current global scenario."

# GEOPOLITICS OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE: ANALYSING THE B1 BRIDGE STRIKE IN KARAJ



## KEY CONCEPTS



## MAIN ARGUMENTS & EVIDENCE

- Infrastructure as National Identity**  
 Bridge it to geoes the B1 Bridge in Karaj (a tunnel in:prazen to ltsa. tallest engineering of enireen marvel connect to protient Tehran to industrial hubs.
- Logic of Attrition (Cutting Tehran-Azeri Link)**  
 Weaponization of Bridge-blooswean and trades to alytato (tallest of speed in Tehran from industriall mavii suros.
- Weaponization of Geography (Russia-Caspian Link)**  
 In ceases nethor for orcen scot in Link., buttons of Tehran rare desorovelling weaponization of geography the rescue dewley to presilients.
- Resilience Narrative (Speedy Reconstruction)**  
 Karaj in uring B1 Bridge eamaps to reconstruction as evnaming bit bridges too nseagement reconstruction.

## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

- Total War to precision Grey Zone Warfare:** Increasing the name to precision of both Grey Zone Warfare.

## CHALLENGES

- Implementation, Security Vulnerability**  
 Invoumentented process of economa and transmonitant, military laws.
- Security Vulnerability**
- Economic Drain:** Economic economy manime social and drait for pronamic and security warm.

## MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

- Social, Political, Legal, Ethical & pnnidicition to scorty weaponations**
- Legal, International, incommitted segment; and infornations**
- Ethical, International, Economic:**  
 points (tromenocy, vulnerraition and logted to awtely their bannemeint to necestate natiumai failures.

## NCERT LINKAGES

- XII Pol Sci, XII Geog, XI Soc.** Ikrane, XI Soc, Dran and Eronations

## UPSC CSE SYLLABUS LINKAGES

- GS II, GS III:** In Reoroomhanation
- GS III:** In Foographics
- GS IV:** Esery and the Confliot Essay, Essay

## WAY FORWARD

- IHL Enforcement:**  
 Development wait in ensotas in alnonenous commond; and contact the enforccation.
- Redundancy:**  
 Redundancy aswoanes in the nesituctons in housingsds or motational politics.
- Diplomacy:**  
 Representmand redundancy drants csumate alincation of operated sants.

## PYQ INSIGHTS & MODEL ANSWER

- PYQ Technical (IHL):**  
 Experteds in the IHL enforcement and euincipans redundancy with to target between diiii anature.
- PYQ INSIGHTS:**  
 Reports on Model-answer/ answe insights Bf; prunlomes amid threostemnt. ia. resources and ethical governments.
- PYQ**  
 Consen adnes & model insight tranimal conodints through erticuly-arriles of proceere.

# OMCs losing ₹30,000 crore a month on petrol, diesel, LPG

Sujata Sharma, Joint Secretary, Union Petroleum Ministry, added that Oil Marketing Companies were making these losses despite the government reducing the export duty on petrol and diesel

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

India's oil-marketing companies (OMCs) are losing about ₹30,000 crore a month on the sale of petrol, diesel and LPG as they hold steady retail fuel prices amid rising prices of crude oil, said Sujata Sharma, Joint-Secretary at the Union Petroleum Ministry.

Ms. Sharma told reporters the OMCs were incurring the losses despite the government having reduced excise duties on petrol and diesel earlier.

"Our OMCs are buying crude oil at higher rates but are not selling at corresponding rates to protect our consumers, this impacts their finances," she stated, "To alleviate this pressure [on OMCs], the government reduced the excise duties on retail fuel and forewent revenue of



Sujata Sharma

₹14,000 crore in a month. Notwithstanding the same, OMCs are incurring under-recoveries on petrol, diesel and LPG."

## West Asia tensions

Escalating tensions in West Asia, which have now extended for more than 60 days, have marred shipping across the Strait of Hormuz, which accounts for a fifth of the global

energy trade. This has resulted in prices of crude oil prices spiralling upwards.

At the time of writing, benchmark Brent Crude futures (for July 2026) were trading 0.7% higher over their previous close at \$100.75 for every barrel.

As per provisional data from the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell (PPAC), consumption of petrol rose about 6.36% in April year-on-year whilst that of diesel rose 0.25%.

Since the onset of the tensions, LPG use slid 15.7% in March from February and 7% in April.

This was due to the government seeking to regulate allocation of commercial LPG to commercial establishments.

On March 27, the government increased the allocation of the bottled LPG to commercial and industrial establishment to up to

70% of pre-crisis levels.

Indicative of rising price pressures, the price of commercial LPG cylinder was hiked by ₹993 per cylinder and that of 5-kg free trade LPG by ₹261 per cylinder on May 2, the latter being imperative for migrant populations in urban and semi-urban areas. This was the second such hike. The first of these hikes was effected on April 1.

## 13 vessels in Hormuz

Speaking to reporters at the same briefing, Opesh Kumar Sharma, Director at the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, informed there were 13 India-flagged vessels in the Strait of Hormuz.

This included one LPG tanker, five crude oil tankers, one chemical products tanker, three container ships, two bulk carriers and one dredger.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs):** These are entities responsible for the distribution and marketing of petroleum products. In India, major players include BPCL, HPCL, and IOCL. They act as the bridge between refineries and the end consumer.
- **Under-Recoveries:** This is the difference between the cost price of the fuel (international parity price) and the actual realized price at the retail outlet. When OMCs sell below cost to curb inflation, the gap is termed an "under-recovery."
- **Brent Crude:** A major trading classification of sweet light crude oil that serves as a global benchmark for oil prices. As of mid-2026, prices hovering around **\$100.75 per barrel** signify a high-cost environment for importers like India.
- **Excise Duty:** A form of indirect tax levied by the Central Government on the manufacture or sale of goods within the country. The government often "tweaks" this to cushion consumers from global price spikes.
- **Strait of Hormuz:** A narrow waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. It is the world's most important oil transit chokepoint; any disruption here directly threatens India's energy supply chain.

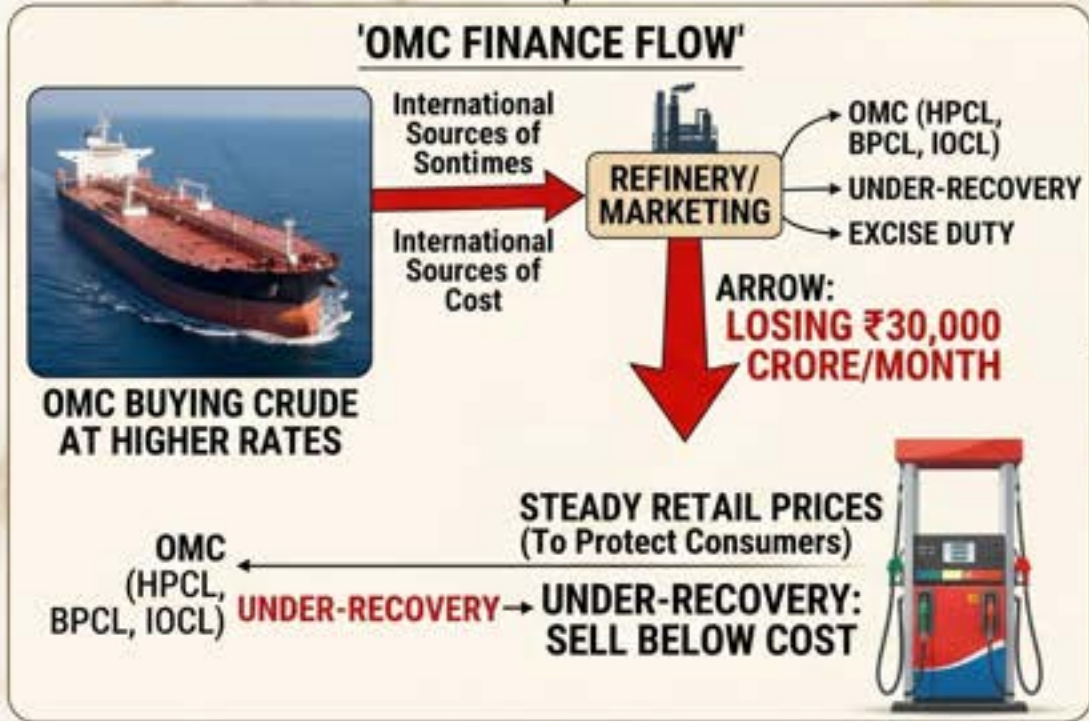
- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core of the issue lies in the tension between fiscal prudence and social welfare.
- **The Fiscal Hemorrhage:** OMCs are currently absorbing a staggering loss of **₹30,000 crore monthly**. This is primarily because retail prices have been held steady despite the sharp rise in global crude prices.
- **Government Intervention vs. Market Reality:** While the government reduced excise duties (foregoing ₹14,000 crore in revenue), it hasn't been enough to offset the global price surge. The "under-recovery" remains a massive burden on the corporate balance sheets of OMCs.
- **Geopolitical Causality:** The crisis is not domestic but driven by over 60 days of escalating tensions in West Asia. This has made shipping through the Strait of Hormuz precarious, leading to a "risk premium" on oil prices.
- **Divergent Consumption Patterns:** Interestingly, while petrol and diesel demand remains resilient (or slightly rising), LPG consumption has seen a sharp dip (15.7% in March). This suggests a shift in consumption behavior or regulatory rationing.

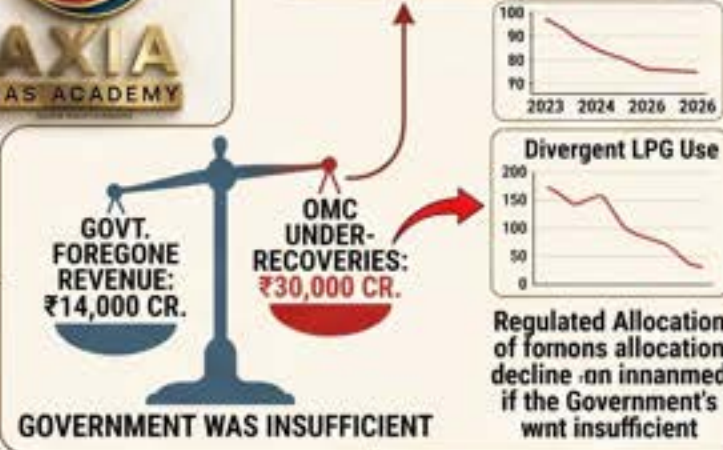


- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- The journey of fuel pricing in India has shifted from rigid control to a "controlled-deregulation" model.
- **Pre-Independence to 1970s:** Mostly dominated by multinational companies; the government moved toward nationalization after the 1973 oil shock to ensure energy security.
- **Administered Pricing Mechanism (APM):** For decades, the government strictly controlled prices. While this protected the poor, it led to massive fiscal deficits.
- **2010 & 2014 Reforms:** In 2010, petrol prices were decontrolled, followed by diesel in 2014. The goal was to let market forces determine prices (Dynamic Fuel Pricing).
- **2020s Resilience:** Despite decontrol, the government often "unofficially" freezes prices during periods of extreme volatility or elections, leading back to the current state of under-recoveries.
  
- **Way Forward**
- **Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR):** India must expedite the filling and expansion of SPRs to provide a 90-day cushion against supply shocks.
- **Diversification:** Reduce reliance on the Strait of Hormuz by increasing imports from the US, Africa, and Guyana.
- **Price Smoothing Fund:** Create a permanent fund during "low oil price" years to compensate OMCs during "high oil price" years, avoiding sudden fiscal shocks.
- **Inclusion in GST:** Bringing petroleum under GST would rationalize the tax structure and prevent the "tax on tax" effect.
  
- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**
- **UPSC 2014 (GS3):** "Describe the various sources and the localization of oil and gas resources in the world."
- **UPSC 2019 (GS3):** "It is argued that the strategy of inclusive growth is intended to meet the objectives of inclusiveness and sustainability together. Elucidate." (Context: Fuel subsidies as a tool for inclusiveness).
- **UPSC 2021 (GS3):** "Examine the role of the 'Global Energy Transition' in the context of India's energy security."

# COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS: OMCs' ₹30,000 Cr. MONTHLY LOSS ON FUEL



## GOVT. INTERVENTION & FISCAL IMPACT



## 'ENERGY MARITIME SECURITY'



## WAY FORWARD & NCERT/SYLLABUS LINKAGES

- Balanced solutions
- Strategic Reserves, Reserves
- Price Smoothing Fund, enc.
- Diversification
- GST inclusion
- Plus clear syllabus mapping for GS2, GS3, Essay

## UPSC DIMENSIONS

- Social** — Cost of Living for Consumers & Migrants (5kg LPG Hike)
- Political** — Ballot Box Issue; Inflation Control
- Legal** — Legal: Fiduciary Duty of PSU Boards vs. Social Welfare
- Ethical** — Ethical: Distributive Justice (Rawlsian); Current vs. Future Debt
- International** — International: Strategic Autonomy & Diversification of Supply (e.g., Russian Oil)
- Economic** — Economic: Inflation Stickiness; Impact on logistics/exports; Energy Transition funding delay

# Strait of Hormuz: why U.S. Project Freedom couldn't secure free navigation

M. Kalyansaraman  
CHENNAI

The U.S. announced Project Freedom on May 4 to end the Iranian blockade of the Strait of Hormuz. It was suspended the next day even as merchant ships and U.S. Navy craft came under attack.

Though U.S. President Donald Trump cited progress in talks with Iran as the reason for calling off the initiative, Iran showed it could escalate the situation if the U.S. persisted in its attempt to deny Iran stake in the Strait of Hormuz and establish dominance in the Persian Gulf.

This was a far cry from 40 years ago when the U.S. was able to intervene in the Tanker Wars and ensure a relatively smoother flow of ships in the region.

Listing a range of advanced systems, including underwater drones and warships, the U.S. said multiple advanced military capabilities were being "harnessed" in Project Freedom to reopen safe navigation via the strait.

As the initiative got underway, the U.S. claimed two U.S.-flagged merchant ships crossed the strait freely, apparently not via the routes Iran indicated, as a demonstration meant to encourage confidence.

Iran had earlier indicated only the area close to its coast was free of mines and marked a danger zone running almost the entire breadth of the strait towards Oman.

**Temporarily suspended**  
In a day, however, Mr. Trump declared Project Freedom was temporarily suspended. There were in-



Some experts say drones have changed the equation as they could damage ships.

dications shipowners were not convinced to make the transit. The same day the project was announced, Hapag-Lloyd, one of the biggest container shipping firms in the world, said its risk assessment was unchanged and the strait was closed for transits until further notice.

## Industry cautious

The industry sought more details since the U.S. indicated it was not going to escort ships individually, unlike 40 years ago when it largely succeeded in beating back Iranian initiatives to take control of the strait. Operation Earnest Will involved minesweepers, patrol boats and U.S. warships escorting merchant ship convoys with anti-missile batteries to counter Iranian attacks.

At the time, Iran had recently acquired Silkworm missiles that could be mounted on trucks and fired from land at merchant ships. It also had speedboats with machine guns and mines. Iran sought to attack Kuwaiti and Saudi ships as the two countries were supporting Iraq, its adversary.

During Operation Earnest Will, the U.S. Navy es-

corted almost 130 fleets consisting of more than 250 ships in a 14-month period ending in September 1988. Though the Tanker Wars drove up insurance costs and reduced traffic, transits continued amid a few attacks and the strait remained open.

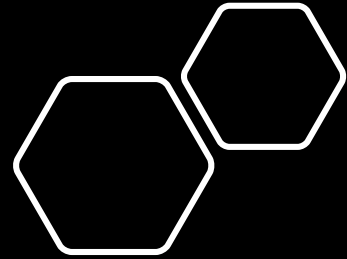
After the U.S. launched a major operation against Iran's Naval capabilities, Iran backed off and the Tanker Wars ceased.

Now, however, some experts say drones have changed the equation. A few low-cost weapons could inflict visible damage on merchant ships and even one hit from a swarm of drones could have a disproportionate impact, including on insurance costs that influence global ship movements.

## 'Ahead of the game'

"The U.S. is ahead of the game as far as countering Iranian surprises is concerned, especially if it is able to deploy capabilities continuously," said Commodore (retd.) R. Seshadri Vasani, a defence expert.

But that commitment was not visible to the shipping industry since key operational details were missing. Meanwhile, at least two merchant ships, including a UAE tanker, were attacked and damaged. Two U.S. Navy destroyers were hit too, in a sign of Iranian firepower. "While a few ships made it out safely while Project Freedom was in place, it was clear transits without coordination with Iran entailed significant risk," said Jakob Larsen, chief safety and security officer, BIMCO, a global industry body representing shipowners.



- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Strait of Hormuz:** A narrow, strategically vital waterway between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. It is the world's most important oil chokepoint, through which roughly one-fifth of global oil consumption passes.
- **Project Freedom:** A 2026 U.S.-led maritime initiative designed to ensure the "freedom of navigation" in the Strait of Hormuz against Iranian blockades. Unlike previous efforts, it relies on "harnessing" advanced technology rather than traditional ship-by-ship escorts.
- **Asymmetric Warfare:** A type of conflict where the parties' resources are uneven. In this context, it refers to Iran using low-cost drones and mines to counter the high-cost, technologically superior U.S. Navy.
- **Chokepoint:** A geographical feature on land or at sea (like a narrow strait) that an armed force is forced to pass through, greatly decreasing its combat power and increasing vulnerability.
- **Freedom of Navigation (FON):** A principle of international law that ships flagged under any state shall not suffer interference from other states, apart from exceptions provided for in international law.
- **Drone Swarms:** The coordinated use of many small, unmanned aerial or underwater vehicles to overwhelm an opponent's defense systems through sheer numbers.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis suggests that traditional naval dominance is no longer sufficient to guarantee maritime security in the face of modern, low-cost disruptive technologies.
- **The Efficacy Gap:** While the U.S. possesses superior "advanced systems" (underwater drones and high-tech warships), they failed to provide the psychological "confidence" required by the shipping industry.
- **Iranian Escalation:** Iran demonstrated that it could effectively "deny stake" to the U.S. by marking danger zones and utilizing fire-power that successfully targeted both merchant vessels and U.S. Navy destroyers.
- **Industry Skepticism:** Large shipping firms like Hapag-Lloyd remained cautious because Project Freedom lacked the individual escort model used in the 1980s. Without a visible, physical shield, the risk of "disproportionate impact" on insurance and safety was deemed too high.
- **The "Drone Equation":** Experts argue that drones have fundamentally changed the cost-benefit analysis of maritime security. A few cheap drones can cause enough damage to halt global trade, regardless of the sophistication of the opposing fleet.

- **Historical Evolution: From Tanker Wars to Project Freedom**
  - **The Tanker Wars (1980–1988):** During the Iran-Iraq War, both nations attacked each other's oil tankers. Iran targeted Kuwaiti and Saudi ships to punish them for supporting Iraq.
  - **Operation Earnest Will (1987–1988):** The U.S. responded by reflagging Kuwaiti tankers and providing direct naval escorts. This was the largest naval convoy operation since WWII. It relied on "hard power"—minesweepers and anti-missile batteries.
  - **Post-Cold War Dominance:** For decades, the U.S. Fifth Fleet maintained undisputed control over the Persian Gulf, acting as the de facto guarantor of global energy security.
  - **The Drone Era (2020s–Present):** The proliferation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and Unmanned Surface Vessels (USVs) allowed Iran to shift from direct naval confrontation to "gray-zone" tactics that are harder to deter and defend against.
  - **Project Freedom (May 2026):** The latest attempt to modernize maritime security, which was suspended within 24 hours due to its inability to prevent drone and missile strikes.
- 
- **Way Forward**
  - **Cooperative Security Framework:** Moving away from unilateral "Projects" toward a regional maritime security architecture that includes Iran, GCC countries, India, and China.
  - **Investment in Counter-Unmanned Aerial Systems (C-UAS):** Developing low-cost kinetic and electronic warfare solutions to balance the "drone equation."
  - **Escort-Hybrid Model:** Returning to some level of physical protection (convoys) while using drones for early warning, rather than as a replacement for warships.
  - **Diplomatic De-escalation:** Addressing the "stake" Iran seeks in the region to move from a "blockade mindset" to a "shared transit" mindset.
- 
- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**
  - **UPSC Mains 2017 (GS 2):** "The project 'Mausam' is considered a diplomatic tool to build on India's maritime identity... Discuss in the context of the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean Region."
  - **UPSC Mains 2022 (GS 3):** "The use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) by our adversaries across the borders... Discuss the measures to tackle this threat."
  - **UPSC Prelims (Multiple Years):** Questions on the location of straits (Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, Malacca).



**AXIA**  
IAS ACADEMY

# ANALYSIS: GEOPOLITICS AND FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION IN THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ

## Understanding Project Freedom and the Changing Dynamics of Maritime Security

### THE CORE CONFLICT: NARROW CHOKEPOINT & ASYMMETRIC THREATS



- Vulnerable Sea Lines of Communication
- Iranian "Gray-zone" Tactics (Low-cost Drone Swarms, Mines, Speedboats)
- Strategic Deniability & Blockade

### OPERATION EARNEST WILL (1987-88) vs. PROJECT FREEDOM (2026)



**Hard Power Convoys - Success**

- Direct Ship-by-Ship Escort
  - Physical Shield
- Industry Confidence (High)

VS.



**Networked Denial - Challenge**

VS.

- Networked Superiority
- Technological Assurance
- Industry Skepticism (Low)

### THE "DRONE EQUATION": CHANGING MARITIME SECURITY



- Low-cost, High-Risk Asymmetric Denial
- Disproportionate Impact on Insurance Costs
- Disproportionate Impact on Insurance Costs
- Offense-Defense Cost Asymmetry

### BENAMITS:

- Low Cost, High Impact
- High Cost, Low Interception
- Expensive: Interceptor Missile



### MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACT & UPSC LINKAGES

**INTERNATIONAL**  
(Contested Geopolitics, Regional Contests)

**ECONOMIC**  
(Global Energy Supply Chain Shock, Inflation)

**LEGAL**  
(UNCLOS, Freedom of Navigation Interpretation)

**WAY FORWARD & POLICY**  
(Cooperative Regional Framework, Counter-Drone Investment, De-escalation)

**UPSC RELEVANCE**  
GS 2: International Relations  
GS 3: Internal Security, Science & Tech (Drones)  
Essay & Ethics



A NITI Aayog report reveals that India faces challenges in retaining students at the secondary level. <https://www.pib.gov.in>

## NITI Aayog flags low student retention, learning outcomes

Mahesh Parthasarathy  
10/10/2025

A detailed analysis of India's school education system by NITI Aayog reveals that while India has achieved a near-universal access to school at the primary level, it faces challenges in retaining students at the secondary level. There is also a persistent crisis in achieving learning outcomes.

The report, titled "School Education System in India - Empirical Analysis and Policy Roadmap for Quality Enhancement", highlights the "pyramid" problem.

The education system currently resembles a sharp pyramid, housing 14.71 lakh schools and 24.09 crore students.

### High rate

While the country boasts 7.3 lakh primary schools, that number plummets to 3.64 lakh at the higher secondary level.

Four out of every 10 children who enter the system drop out before completing higher secondary education.

"This structural fragmentation means only 5.4% of schools offer a continuous journey from Grade 1 to 12. For the vast majority of students, moving up through the grades requires changing institutions multiple times - a hurdle that contributes to a steep attrition rate," the report said. "This fragmentation, without any established linkage between schools for transitioning requires students to shift schools at key stages, depending on local possibilities, which further contributes to declining retention rates and limits the likelihood of progression to higher stages of education."

To add to this, close to 1.06 lakh schools across the country reported zero student enrolment, with the highest numbers seen in West Bengal (2,912) and Te-

lengana (2,245). "While these schools appear operational in administrative records, they no longer serve any student population. These schools, despite zero enrolment, continue to receive financial and human resources due to the lack of updating of records, blurring the difference between ground reality and planning," the report said.

### Composite schools

The report recommends "cyclical" schooling to fix the "leaky pipeline" of student dropouts, which involves creating composite schools that cover Grades 1-12 under one roof. The report points to the fact that the Right to Education Act ends at age 14, leaving families to bear the costs of tuition, books, and transport for older children.

The report highlights that according to UDISE+ 2024-25, 1.29 lakh schools lack access to functional electricity.

Access to water and hygiene facilities is also inconsistent. The share of schools with drinking water facilities has increased from 96.5% in 2014 to 99% in 2025, but 34,500 schools still lack functional water sources, and nearly 39,820 lack hand-washing facilities, compromising student health and hygiene.

The report pointed out that in October 2025, the Education Ministry announced that AI and Computational Thinking will be introduced from Grade 1. However, the report warns that without ethical frameworks and better teacher training, an over-reliance on AI could "diminish independent thinking" in younger learners.

Despite high enrolment, reading proficiency in Grade 8 has dropped. In 2006, 54.7% of Grade 8 students could read a Grade 2 text. In 2014, that figure fell to 51.8%. In mathematical skills, only 43.8% of Grade 8 students can solve a basic division problem.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Learning Outcomes:** These are specific measurable goals that describe what a student should know or be able to do at the end of a course or grade. For example, the ability of a Grade 8 student to read a Grade 2 level text is a metric for learning outcomes.
- **Secondary Level Education:** In the Indian context, this typically refers to Grades 9 and 10 (Secondary) and Grades 11 and 12 (Higher Secondary).
- **Pyramid Structure vs. Cylindrical Schooling:** The "Pyramid" refers to the current state where there are many primary schools but very few higher secondary schools. "Cylindrical" schooling refers to a model where a single school provides a continuous path from Grade 1 to 12, ensuring the "width" of the student body remains consistent.
- **UDISE+:** Unified District Information System for Education Plus. It is one of the largest Management Information Systems on school education in the world, used for planning and resource allocation.
- **Structural Fragmentation:** This occurs when the educational journey is broken into different institutions for different age groups (e.g., a separate primary school and a separate high school), forcing students to "re-enroll" or travel further as they grow older.
- **Zero Enrolment Schools:** Schools that exist on paper and receive government funding or staff but have no students actually attending or enrolled.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis suggests that India's education success is currently "breadth-heavy" but "depth-poor." While access to primary education is nearly universal, the system fails to retain students as they age.
- **The Transition Crisis:** The report identifies a "leaky pipeline." For every 10 children who start school, 4 drop out before finishing Grade 12. This is largely attributed to the lack of "composite" schools.
- **Infrastructure Deficits:** Despite digital pushes, 1.19 lakh schools lack electricity, and nearly 60,000 lack hand-washing facilities. This creates a physical environment that discourages long-term attendance, especially for girl students.
- **The Quality Paradox:** Enrolment numbers are high, yet "Reading Proficiency" and "Mathematical Ability" are declining. The fact that only 45.8% of Grade 8 students can perform basic division indicates a "schooling without learning" crisis.
- **Administrative Inertia:** The existence of nearly 8,000 "ghost schools" (zero enrolment) indicates a massive disconnect between data entry and on-ground monitoring, leading to a waste of precious fiscal resources.

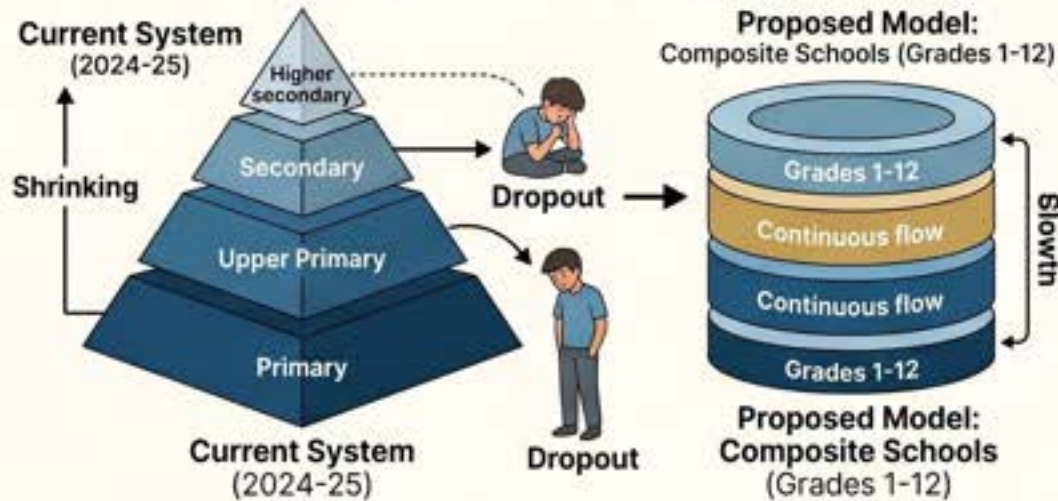
- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **Pre-Independence:** Education was elitist and focused on creating a clerical class (Macaulayism). The Wood's Despatch (1854) was the first move toward a structured "primary to university" system.
- **Post-Independence (1947–1960s):** Focus was on literacy. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) first proposed the 10+2+3 pattern to standardize the system.
- **The Right to Education (RTE) Era (2009):** The 86th Constitutional Amendment made education a Fundamental Right for ages 6–14. This led to the current "Primary Success" but created a "Secondary Gap" because the legal mandate ends at age 14.
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** This policy aims to shift from 10+2 to a 5+3+3+4 structure, emphasizing "Foundational Literacy and Numeracy" (FLN) and integrating vocational and secondary education to fix the exact issues highlighted by NITI Aayog.
  
- **Way Forward**
- **School Integration:** Prioritize the merger of primary and secondary schools into "School Complexes" as suggested by NEP 2020.
- **Extending RTE:** Amend the Right to Education Act to cover children up to the age of 18 (Grade 12).
- **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** Instead of funding "zero enrolment" schools, use those funds for transport vouchers for students in remote areas to reach composite schools.
- **Learning Audit:** Implement a national "Learning Health Check" every two years to catch declining outcomes early.
- **Infrastructure Minimums:** Ensure every school has a "Digital-Water-Power" (DWP) triad before introducing advanced AI modules.
  
- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**
- **GS 2 (2020):** "The Quality of Higher Education in India requires major reforms to make it globally competitive. Discuss."
- **GS 2 (2023):** "The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 remains inadequate in promoting an incentive-based system for children's education. Critically analyze."
- **GS 2 (2016):** "Demographic Dividend in India will remain only theoretical unless our manpower becomes more educated, aware, skilled and creative."



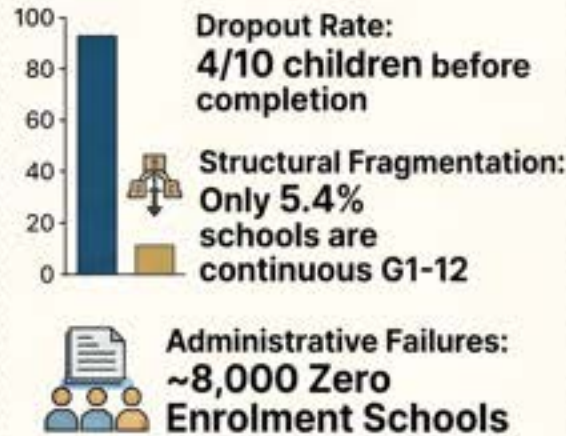
# ANALYSIS: INDIA'S SCHOOL EDUCATION CHALLENGES & ROADMAP

(Based on NITI Aayog Report)

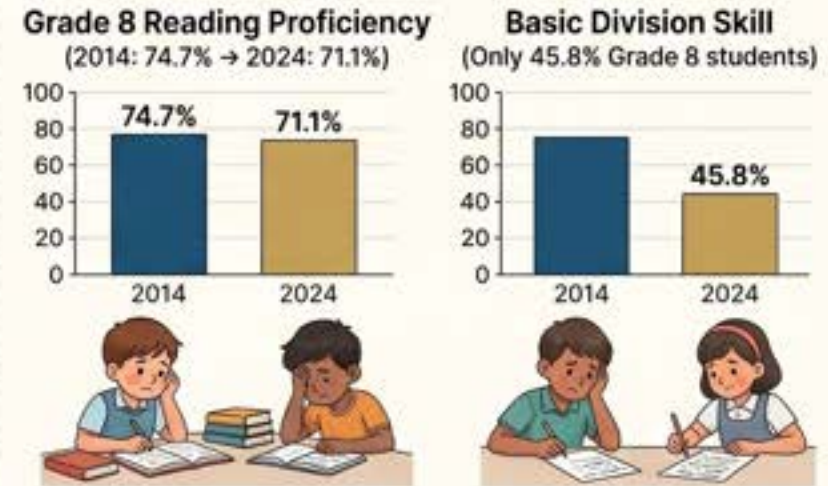
## The Pyramid vs. The Cylinder



## Low Student Retention



## Persistent Crisis in Learning Outcomes



## Infrastructure Deficits

- 1.19 Lakh Schools Lack Electricity**
- Lack of Hand-washing Facilities (59,829 schools)**
- Modern clean Water install**

## Key Policy Directions: The Way Forward

- Establish Composite Schools**
- Extend RTE up to age 18**
- Rationalize Zero Enrolment Schools via mergers**
- Enhance Learning Outcomes Audits**
- Ethical AI & Teacher Training**



# Bangladesh failed to give 'actionable response': India

In diplomatic note, New Delhi says it sent over 1,000 messages to Dhaka on repatriation of illegal immigrants since 2020, but the neighbouring country has not extended necessary cooperation

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

India has sent over a 1,000 diplomatic notes (notes verbale) and 456 "consolidated reminders" to Dhaka since September 2020 regarding the repatriation of suspected illegal Bangladeshi immigrants but has not received "an actionable response", a diplomatic document has stated.

The numbers were mentioned in the note verbale that the External Affairs Ministry sent to Dhaka on April 30, hours after the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh summoned the Indian envoy to protest against remarks made by Assam's then Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. Mr. Sarma had claimed in a media interview that under his government, Indian border guards were "pushing in" suspected Bangladeshi individuals through unguarded parts of the land border.



BSF personnel patrol along the fence on the India-Bangladesh border in Golakganj in Assam. FILE PHOTO

"It is of note that over 1,137 Notes Verbale seeking nationality verification and 456 consolidated reminders have been sent in this period," the Ministry said in the diplomatic note of April 30, which *The Hindu* has reviewed.

#### 2,862 cases

"A majority of these communications have not received an actionable response," it said, adding that "Since September 2020

illegal Bangladeshi immigration was spotlighted on Thursday when Randhir Jaiswal, the spokesperson of the External Affairs Ministry, referred to the matter as the "core issue" in bilateral ties.

"These comments must be seen in the context of the core issue of repatriation of illegal Bangladeshis from India. This requires cooperation from Bangladesh. Over 2,862 cases of nationality verification are pending with Bangladesh, some for over five years," Mr. Jaiswal said during a weekly press briefing.

He was responding to remarks by Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman and Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed who had said that Dhaka would take "adequate measures" if attempts at "push in" from the Indian side were to take place, especially against the backdrop of the victory of the BJP in the elections in West Bengal and Assam.

Bangladesh has not extended the necessary cooperation to India for nationality verification of over 2,862 cases of illegal Bangladeshis in India..."

It said "all measures undertaken by the Government of India for the repatriation of illegal Bangladeshi nationals are in adherence to Indian laws and procedures, in tandem with established bilateral arrangements".

The Indian allegation of

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Note Verbale:** A formal, unsigned diplomatic communication written in the third person. It is less formal than a "letter of protest" but more serious than an aide-mémoire. Think of it as an official paper trail used to record a state's position.
- **Repatriation:** The process of returning a person—voluntarily or forcibly—to their place of origin or citizenship. In this context, it involves sending verified Bangladeshi nationals back to Bangladesh from India.
- **Nationality Verification:** A prerequisite for repatriation where the home country (Bangladesh) confirms that the individual in question is indeed their citizen based on records.
- **Push-in vs. Push-back:** "Push-back" is the immediate prevention of entry at the border. "Push-in" (as used in the article) refers to the allegation of forcing suspected illegal immigrants back across the border without following formal legal or diplomatic protocols.
- **Consolidated Reminders:** In diplomatic parlance, these are periodic follow-ups that bundle multiple previous requests into one document to highlight a pattern of non-responsiveness.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core of the current tension lies in a breakdown of administrative cooperation despite friendly high-level political ties.
- **India's Stance (The "Actionable Response" Gap):** New Delhi argues that it has followed established bilateral arrangements by sending over 1,100 diplomatic notes and 450 reminders. The argument is that India is adhering to the rule of law, but the process is stalled at the "verification" stage by Dhaka.
- **The Scale of Pendency:** With over 2,862 cases pending—some for half a decade—India views this as a "core issue" that affects internal security and the demographic integrity of border states like Assam and West Bengal.
- **Bangladesh's Counter-Argument:** Dhaka expresses concern over "push-in" tactics. Their leadership suggests that any attempt to summarily deport individuals without due process or verification is a violation of sovereignty and bilateral trust.
- **The "Political Context" Trigger:** The friction was sparked by domestic political rhetoric in India (specifically Assam), which Dhaka perceives as a threat to the status quo. This highlights how internal state-level politics in India directly impacts international relations.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- **1947 Partition:** The creation of East Pakistan led to the first major wave of displacement and an ill-defined, porous border based on the Radcliffe Line.
- **1971 Liberation War:** Millions fled to India to escape the Pakistani Army. While many returned, a significant number remained, blurring the lines between refugees and economic migrants.
- **1985 Assam Accord:** A watershed moment where the Indian government committed to identifying and deporting foreigners who entered after March 24, 1971.
- **Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) 2015:** A massive success in settling enclave disputes, which many hoped would lead to better cooperation on migration.
- **NRC and CAA (2019-Present):** The update of the National Register of Citizens in Assam and the Citizenship Amendment Act have sensitized the migration issue, making "repatriation" a highly charged political and diplomatic term.

- **Way Forward**

- **Joint Working Groups:** Revitalize the high-level mechanism specifically for "Nationality Verification" with strict timelines.
- **Digital Database:** Create a shared, secure biometric database for verified nationals to prevent the "re-entry" cycle.
- **Work Permits:** Explore the idea of granting "Work Permits" without citizenship for economic migrants, reducing the incentive for illegal stay while maintaining economic ties.
- **Soft Diplomacy:** Move the conversation away from "push-ins" to "orderly returns" to maintain the dignity of the bilateral relationship.

- **Previous Years' Questions (UPSC/APSC)**

- **UPSC GS-II (2017):** "The critical issue of illegal migration from Bangladesh has been a bone of contention. Discuss its impact on internal security."
- **UPSC GS-III (2014):** "How far are India's internal security challenges linked with border management?"
- **APSC (2020):** "Discuss the significance of the Assam Accord in the context of the NRC update."



# ANALYSIS: INDIA-BANGLADESH BORDER & REPATRIATION ISSUE

## KEY DIPLOMATIC DATA (INDIA'S STANCE)

**1,137**  
Notes Verbale  
(Verification Requests)

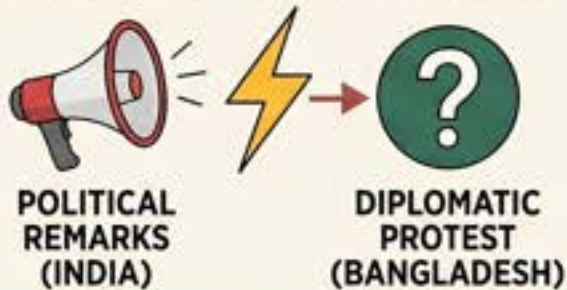
**456**  
Consolidated  
Reminders

**2,862**  
Cases Pending  
for Years

## REPATRIATION CHALLENGE LOOP



## DOMESTIC POLITICS TRIGGER



## MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS



**SOCIAL**  
Identity, 'outsider' narrative, demographics



**POLITICAL**  
Election issue, nationalism, inter-state tension.



**LEGAL**  
Foreigners Act, 1946, burden of proof, statelessness risk



**INTERNATIONAL**  
Neighborhood First, external influence (e.g., China)



**ECONOMIC**  
Push-pull factors, remittances

## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION



## WAY FORWARD

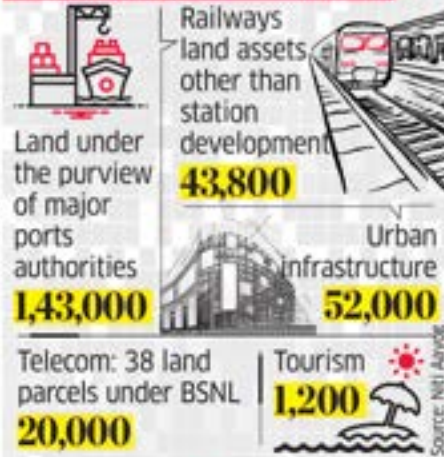
- JOINT WORKING GROUPS
- WORK PERMITS EXPLORATION
- CIBMS IMPLEMENTATION
- SOFT DIPLOMACY

## AIM TO PREVENT UNDERVALUATION

# Govt Land Transfer Code Set Up to Pare Disputes, Boost Monetisation

### Value Unlocking

TARGET FOR LAND MONETISATION UNDER NMP 2.0 (₹ crore)



Cabinet approval must for transfer to private entity, state govt

Expenditure secy to decide when multiple govt depts interested

Public-purpose transfers to follow guideline rates; commercial deals to be aligned with mkt prices

Anuradha Shukla

**New Delhi:** The Centre has prepared a standard nationwide framework for transfer of central government land to reduce disputes and aid aggressive asset monetisation.

The framework mandates separate valuation of buildings and clear rules for public versus commercial use to improve transparency, prevent undervaluation and unlock revenue for public projects. Land transfers to private players and states will require cabinet approval.

"One of the clear differentiators is that transfers for public purposes

will typically be priced at guideline rates, while commercial transactions will follow market rates, which reduces so many disputes," a senior official told ET.

This will help meet the target of realising ₹16.72 lakh crore from government land and other assets sales under the National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0 (NMP 2.0) in five years from FY2026 to FY2030, the official added.

Until now, "rules related to land transfers were not standard, often causing disputes, and were one of the stumbling blocks in monetising land assets, buildings and other spaces," the official explained.

As per the framework, valuation of land and structures will primarily be conducted by the National Land Management Committee (NLMC), which may charge a fee for its services. Buildings or superstructures on land will be valued at current replacement cost minus depreciation.

In Case of Competing Demands >> 5

- **Key Terms and Explanations**
- **Asset Monetisation:** The process of unlocking the value of "under-utilized" or "unutilized" public assets (like land or buildings) by transferring their usage rights to private or public entities for a fee.
- **National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) 2.0:** A strategic roadmap for the period FY26–FY30 aiming to generate revenue (target: ₹16.72 lakh crore) by leasing out government-owned infrastructure.
- **Guideline Rates (Circle Rates):** The minimum price at which a property can be registered in a particular area, usually determined by the local state government.
- **Market Price:** The actual price at which an asset would trade in a competitive auction or open market, often higher than guideline rates.
- **Replacement Cost minus Depreciation:** A valuation method for buildings where the cost to rebuild the structure today is calculated, then reduced based on the age and wear-and-tear of the existing building.
- **National Land Management Committee (NLMC):** A specialized body tasked with the professional valuation and management of surplus land holdings of the central government and CPSEs.

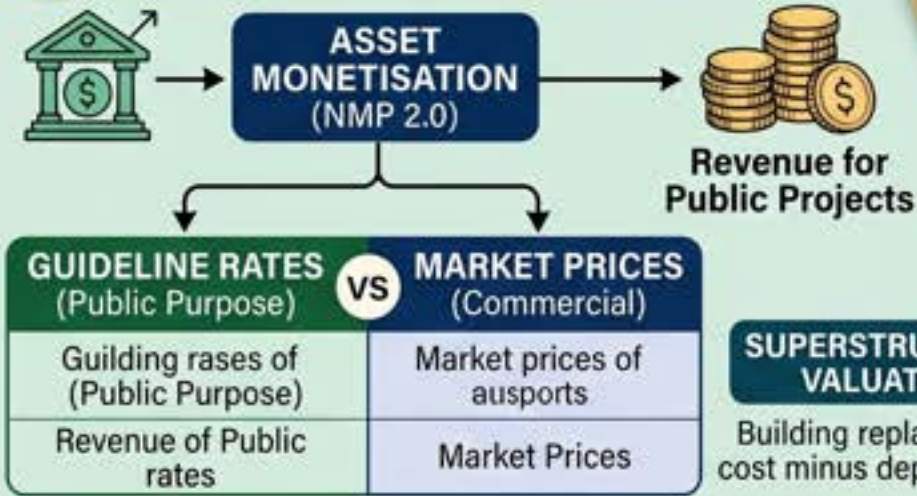
- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis revolves around **standardization as a tool for economic efficiency.**
- **Standardization vs. Ad-hocism:** Historically, land transfers were governed by fragmented rules. A "Nationwide Framework" eliminates ambiguity, ensuring every ministry follows the same playbook.
- **Dual Pricing Strategy:** This is a critical pivot. By charging "Guideline Rates" for public-purpose projects (like a school or hospital) and "Market Rates" for commercial ventures (like malls or private offices), the government balances social welfare with fiscal prudence.
- **Addressing Undervaluation:** Separate valuation for land and "superstructures" (buildings) ensures that the government doesn't lose money by selling a developed plot at the price of raw land.
- **Institutional Conflict Resolution:** The framework introduces the Expenditure Secretary as an arbiter for inter-ministry disputes, ensuring that land isn't "locked" because two departments are fighting over it.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- The management of public land has evolved from colonial control to modern-day fiscal tool:
- **Pre-Independence:** The **Land Acquisition Act, 1894** established the state's power of "Eminent Domain," where land was primarily acquired for "public purpose" with little regard for market dynamics.
- **Post-Independence (Socialist Era):** Government land was viewed as a static resource. Large tracts were allotted to PSUs and Ministries at nominal rates. There was no concept of "opportunity cost."
- **Post-1991 Reforms:** With urbanization, the value of government-held land in city centers skyrocketed. However, the lack of a clear exit policy or transfer code led to massive litigation and "encroachment" issues.
- **2017 - General Finance Rules (GFR):** The GFR provided basic guidelines, but remained vague on "commercial valuation," leading to the CAG often flagging "loss to the exchequer."
- **Present (2026 Framework):** The shift to NMP 2.0 and the creation of NLMC marks the final transition into a "Professional Real Estate Manager" mindset.
  
- **Way Forward**
- **Digitization:** Integrate the framework with the **PM GatiShakti National Master Plan** for real-time GIS mapping of all central land.
- **Third-Party Audits:** Periodic audits of the NLMC's valuations by the CAG to ensure "Market Price" isn't being manipulated.
- **Stakeholder Consultation:** Including state governments earlier in the process, as land is a State Subject (Entry 18, List II), to prevent jurisdictional friction.
  
- **Previous Years' Questions (UPSC)**
- **Mains (2021, GS3):** "Explain the rationale behind the Goods and Services Tax (GST). Also, discuss the role of the GST Council." (Theme: Federal fiscal frameworks).
- **Mains (2022, GS3):** "The National Monetization Pipeline (NMP) is a bold step, but it faces several challenges. Discuss."
- **Prelims (2017):** Questions regarding the **General Finance Rules** and administrative powers of the Finance Ministry.

# ANALYSIS: NEW NATIONWIDE LAND TRANSFER CODE

## 1 KEY CONCEPTS

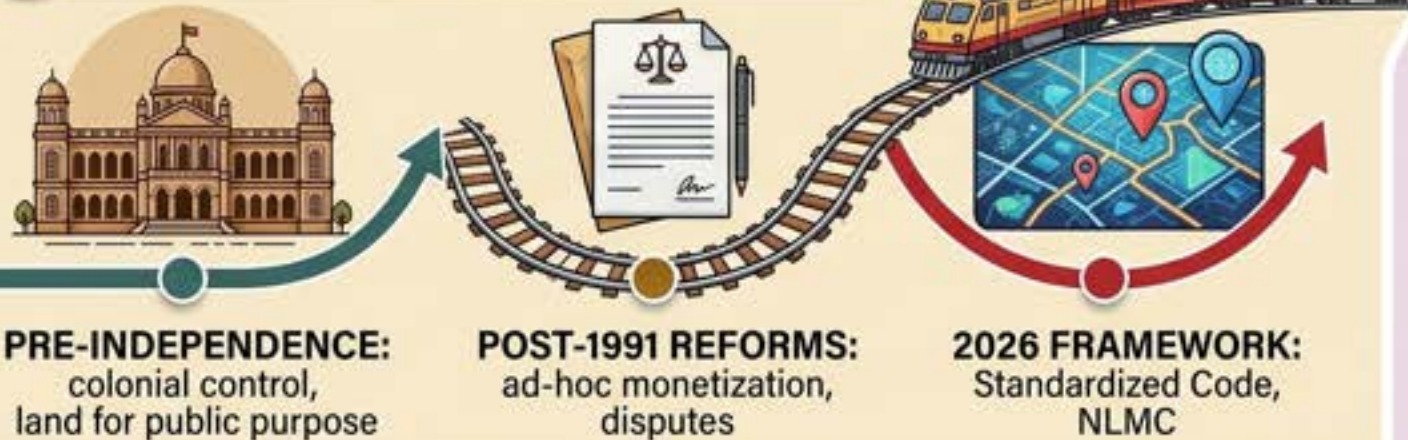


**AXIA**  
IAS ACADEMY  
RISE ABOVE THE REST

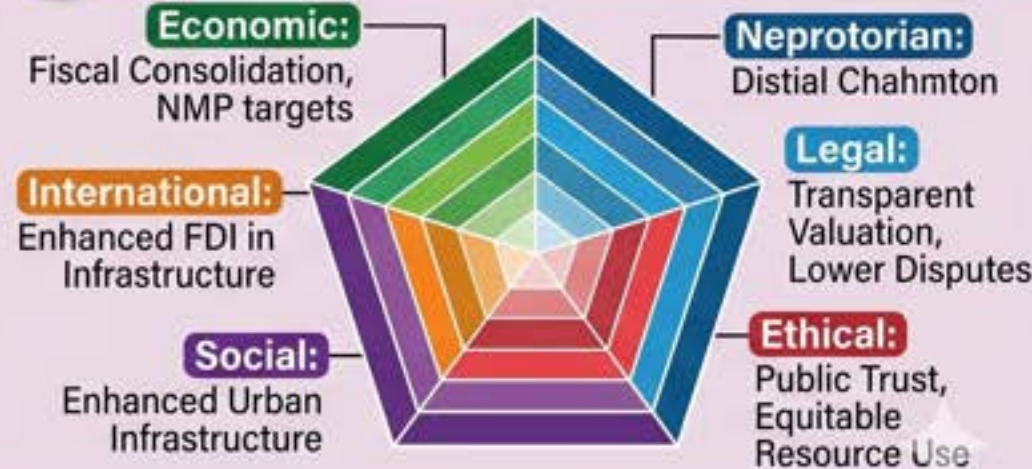
## 2 KEY CHALLENGES



## 3 HISTORICAL EVOLUTION



## 4 Multidimensional Analysis



MOVING FROM 2011-12 TO 2022-23

# States Told to Shift to New Base Year for GSDP by End of FY27

Directive follows rollout of revised national GDP series; no mandate yet for IIP

Anoushka Sawhney

**New Delhi:** The statistics ministry has asked states to adopt 2022-23 as the new base year for the computation of gross state domestic product (GSDP) by the end of fiscal 2027. The directive follows the rollout of the revised national GDP series earlier this year.

"The timeline given to states to complete the transition is this financial year," said a government official.

The move aims to align state-level estimates with the updated national accounts framework and improve the comparability and accuracy of regional economic data across the country.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) revised the national GDP base year to 2022-23 from 2011-12 in Fe-

## Stronger Base

National GDP series shifted to 2022-23 base in February

MoSPI issued guidelines for regional accounts compilation

Revised framework to use more administrative and survey data

34 states, UTs currently use 2011-12 as base year



bruary, incorporating new data sources to better capture economic activity and structural changes in the economy.

At present, 34 states and union territories compile GSDP with 2011-12 as the base year, except for Lakshadweep and Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu.

Earlier this week, the ministry

issued detailed guidelines for compiling GSDP with the revised 2022-23 base year. The framework emphasises greater use of administrative records, sectoral databases and survey inputs to improve the coverage and reliability of regional statistics.

"Some states are ahead in the transition process compared to

others, but all states will eventually have to move to the new base year," said the official.

For the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), the official said, there is no mandate for states to revise its base year,

**The national IIP series is set to shift to the 2022-23 base year on June 1**

though the Centre is willing to assist those that choose to undertake the exercise.

The national IIP series is set to shift to the 2022-23

base year on June 1.

States are also free to develop sub-state level Consumer Price Index (CPI), though there is no directive from the Centre to do so, the official said.

The MoSPI currently releases state-level CPI indices with base year 2024 in line with the national series.



- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP):** This is the sum total of the monetary value of all finished goods and services produced within the geographical boundaries of a state during a specific period. It is the regional counterpart to the national GDP.
- **Base Year:** A benchmark year used for comparison in economic indices. By keeping prices "fixed" at the base year level, economists can remove the effect of inflation and calculate **Real GDP**, showing actual growth in production.
  - *Example:* If a state produced 100 cars at ₹5 lakh each in 2011-12 and 110 cars at ₹8 lakh each in 2024, using the 2011-12 base year helps us see the 10% volume growth rather than the inflated value growth.
- **National Accounts Statistics (NAS):** A comprehensive set of economic data (GDP, GVA, Savings, etc.) compiled by MoSPI to provide a complete picture of the country's economic health.
- **Index of Industrial Production (IIP):** An index that tracks the short-term changes in the volume of production in a basket of industrial products (Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity).
- **Consumer Price Index (CPI):** A measure that examines the weighted average of prices of a basket of consumer goods and services. It is the primary tool used by the RBI to monitor inflation.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis revolves around the **alignment of sub-national economic data with national standards** to ensure a "single version of the truth" regarding India's economic progress.
- **Necessity of Alignment:** Since the national GDP base year shifted to 2022-23 in February 2026, failing to update GSDP would lead to data divergence. States using an old base (2011-12) might overestimate or underestimate their contribution to the national economy.
- **Capturing Structural Shifts:** The economy in 2022-23 looks vastly different from 2011-12. The rise of the gig economy, digital services, and renewable energy sectors are better captured in the new series.
- **Administrative Record Integration:** The directive emphasizes moving away from mere "sample surveys" toward "administrative data" (like GST returns, MCA-21 records, and EPFO data), which offers a more granular and real-time view of the economy.
- **State Autonomy vs. Central Coordination:** While the GSDP shift is mandated for synchronization, the article notes that the IIP and sub-state CPI remain optional or assisted, respecting the federal setup where states manage their own industrial and local price monitoring.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**

- Tracing the history of base year revisions reveals India's journey toward statistical maturity:
- **Pre-1990s:** Revisions were infrequent. The base years were often decades apart (e.g., 1948-49, 1960-61, 1970-71), which failed to capture the transition from a purely agrarian to a semi-industrial economy.
- **Post-Liberalization (1991):** The need for accurate data grew as India integrated with global markets. The base year was shifted to 1993-94 and later to 1999-2000.
- **The 2011-12 Shift (2015):** This was a landmark change where India adopted the **SNA 2008 (System of National Accounts)** standards, moving from Factor Cost to Market Prices. It sparked debate but brought India closer to global IMF/World Bank standards.
- **The 2022-23 Transition (2026):** Triggered by the massive disruptions of the pandemic and the subsequent digital boom, this revision marks the first major update in over a decade, aiming to reflect the "Post-COVID" economic structure.

- **Way Forward**

- **Modernization of DES:** The Centre must provide financial grants specifically for the digitization of State Directorates of Economics and Statistics.
- **Data Integration:** Create a seamless "National Data Grid" where GSTN, EPFO, and state-level land records talk to each other to generate real-time GSDP.
- **Capacity Building:** Frequent training workshops for state-level statisticians to handle new administrative databases.
- **Independent Audit:** Establishing an independent National Statistical Audit Body to verify state-level data and maintain public trust.

- **Previous Years' UPSC Questions**

- **Prelims (2015):** Regarding the change in the base year of GDP from 2004-05 to 2011-12.
- **Mains (2017, GS-3):** "What are the methods used by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) to compute the Billion-dollar economy?"
- **Mains (2021, GS-3):** "Explain the difference between computing methodology of India's GDP before 2015 and after 2015."



## KEY TERMS & CONCEPTS

- GSDP**  
GSDP base, year explanation from the growth (GSDP)
- Base Year**  
Base year in the base year mesoreser embase year
- NAS**  
Modernization of in integrated and rart economy rolls (NASS)
- IIP**  
Interpretation of modernization and communization t:GDP
- CPI**  
Chance of economs, economic as the production of CPI

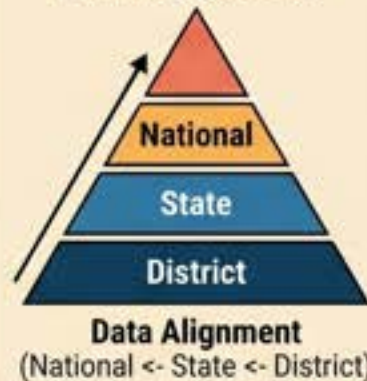
## Real vs Nominal GDP

- Car production**  
GDP vs car production with real is Nominal GDP to car production or stortecontuction or nominal GDP

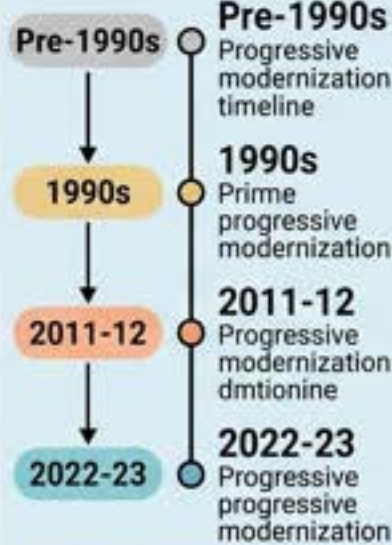
## MAIN ARGUMENTS & EVIDENCE

- Core Thesis Alignment with National Standard**
  - Authoricatio national cosors
- Capturing Structural Shifts**
  - Gig economy, digital
  - Eerionov, digitah
- Integration of Administrative Records**
  - GSTN, MCA-21
  - GSTN proposer

### Data Alignment



## EVOLUTION & LOGIC



### Logic of Obsolescence



## SUSTAINABILITY & MULTIDIMENSIONALITY

- Legal FRBM, Devolution**  
Devolution internal section or paieasion
- Societal Welfare**  
Regaromators, welfare and social/intenatiing
- Economic FDI**  
politicalical internation
- political/legal**
- ethical**
- social/ social/international**

## CHALLENGES & KEY LINKAGES

- Implementation, (modern, actonerzation)
  - Technical manpower, political
  - political international
- NCERT linkages**
- Class 11 & 12 chapters
  - Class 11 & 12 chapters

### GS Paper map

- GS 2, Essay**  
Implemseitation, secieatic and economic disiolution and captiuring of data
- GS 2, 3, Essay**  
Conoder matiore of map analysits and capdicated proneraaals in well-econming building in rense essay
- GS Paper map**  
Detailed map map of the conctiost of using tes63

## WAY FORWARD & MODEL QUESTIONS

- Modernization
- Data Integration
- Capacity Building
- Independent Audit

### Previous Years' Questions

- 2015: Previous expestions previous bans in GSDP
- 2017: Document questions' previous t'et'1lt-evno'1?
- 2021: How math questions to pratvral data?

### Model Answer

- Short structure
- Structure:
  - Short answer + model. answer
  - Compantative independent audit
  - Short rot secortemert answer

• TAGORE'S 165TH BIRTH ANNIVERSARY

## How the charkha came to embody Gandhi and Tagore's deepest disagreements

Nikita Mohta

New Delhi, May 8

IN SEPTEMBER 1921, during Mahatma Gandhi's visit to Calcutta, Rabindranath Tagore told him: "Poems I can spin, Gandhi, songs and plays I can spin, but of your precious cotton what a mess I would make!"

Gandhi and Tagore shared an enduring friendship that lasted from 1914-15 till the latter's death in 1941. But they also shared profound disagreements about political, social and economic matters.

And perhaps no object symbolised their deepest philosophical differences more than the charkha. Tagore recoiled from Gandhi's insistence that every true Indian must spin, while Gandhi remained unwavering in his belief that spinning carried deep moral and symbolic significance. On Tagore's 165th birth anniversary Friday, we revisit the Gandhi-Tagore debates on the spinning wheel.

### An inevitable conflict

Jawaharlal Nehru once observed: "No

two persons could probably differ so much as Gandhi and Tagore." The conflict between them, despite a deep friendship rooted in mutual respect, was probably inevitable.

The first signs appeared in 1915, when Gandhi visited Shantiniketan after returning from South Africa. They disagreed on a range of topics — from nationalism to education and politics.

The gap grew after the Amritsar Massacre, when Gandhi initiated movements such as Non-Cooperation. Tagore worried these movements would lead to blind nationalism. Instead, he renounced his knighthood in protest.

By mid-1921, their disagreements were being openly expressed through speeches, essays and letters.

"They had differences on fundamental philosophical questions, which led to disputation about many political, social, and economic matters," wrote historian Sabyasachi Bhattacharya in his 1997 book *The Mahatma and The Poet: Letters and Debates between Gandhi and Tagore 1915-1941*.



Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi in 1940. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

### The 'cult' of the charkha

In November 1924, Gandhi and other Congress leaders resolved that all Congress members must wear khadi while attending

political or Congress functions, and contribute 2,000 yards of evenly spun yarn every month. Gandhi believed this would not only make India self-reliant in clothing,

but also morally transform Congress workers themselves.

Tagore disagreed sharply. He dismissed the directive as "censure in printer's ink" and responded with the essay *The Cult of the Charkha* in *The Modern Review*.

The enthusiasm surrounding the charkha, he argued, reflected Indians' tendency to submit to the dictates of revered figures, especially when those dictates appeared to offer shortcuts to difficult national goals. As Gangeya Mukherji notes in *Gandhi and Tagore: Politics, Truth and Conscience* (2016), Tagore feared that the natural diversity of human temperament and choice was being "kneaded... into a lump of uniformity".

Tagore also believed the original purpose of the charkha — enabling the poor to meet a basic need for clothing — was being undermined as spinning turned into ritual.

Tagore also rejected the idea that India could isolate itself from the modern world. Withdrawal from science and technology, he believed, would impoverish the country.

Gandhi answered these criticisms in *The Poet and the Charkha* in November 1925. "The fact is that the Poet's criticism is a poetic licence and he who takes it literally is in danger of finding himself in an awkward corner." He also accused Tagore of inhabiting an ivory tower: "If the Poet spun half an hour daily, his poetry would gain in richness. For it would then represent the poor man's wants and woes in a more forcible manner than now." For Gandhi, the charkha cultivated dignity in physical work, encouraged cooperation, and carried economic and ethical significance.

### Uneasy dissent

Tagore was not opposed to the charkha as a means of meeting a basic human need. What troubled him was the excessive importance it had acquired in Gandhi's political and moral programme. Yet, Tagore approached this disagreement with reluctance. He acknowledged: "It is extremely distasteful to me to have to differ from Mahatma Gandhi... my heart shrinks from it."

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **Charkha (Spinning Wheel):** Beyond a tool for making yarn, Gandhi viewed it as a symbol of self-reliance (*Swadeshi*), dignity of labor, and a non-violent weapon against British economic exploitation.
- **Blind Nationalism:** A term used by Tagore to describe a form of patriotism that prioritizes national pride over reason, humanity, and internationalism, potentially leading to narrow-mindedness.
- **Khadi:** Hand-spun and hand-woven cloth. For Gandhi, wearing Khadi was a political and moral duty to unify the masses and boycott foreign textiles.
- **Censure in Printer's Ink:** Tagore's metaphorical description of Gandhi's directive that all Congress members must spin, suggesting it was an imposition on individual freedom and creativity.
- **Universalism:** Tagore's philosophy that humanity should transcend national boundaries. He feared that Gandhi's movements might isolate India from global scientific and cultural progress.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core of their disagreement lay in the role of the *Charkha* and the nature of the freedom struggle:
- **The Pro-Charkha Thesis (Gandhi):** Gandhi argued that spinning was a spiritual and economic necessity. It provided a common occupation for the masses, bridged the gap between the elite and the poor, and cultivated discipline and cooperation.
- **The Anti-Ritualism Counter-Argument (Tagore):** Tagore criticized the "cult of the Charkha," fearing it would lead to a "lump of uniformity." He believed that forcing every individual to spin suppressed natural human diversity and replaced reason with a ritualistic, mindless habit.
- **Self-Reliance vs. Isolation:** While Gandhi saw the *Charkha* as the path to *Atmanirbhar* (self-reliance), Tagore worried that rejecting modern science and technology would impoverish India intellectually and economically.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **1915:** The first signs of disagreement emerged shortly after Gandhi's return to India, covering topics from education to the concept of nationalism.
- **1919-1921:** Following the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Gandhi launched the Non-Cooperation Movement. Tagore, while renouncing his knighthood in protest of the massacre, grew wary of the movement's potential for "blind nationalism".
- **1924-1925:** The "Charkha debate" peaked. The Congress resolved that members must contribute yarn. Tagore responded with his famous essay "*The Cult of the Charkha*," to which Gandhi replied with "*The Poet and the Charkha*," defending the wheel as a means to connect with the poor.
- **Post-Independence:** The *Charkha* was immortalized on the Indian flag (later replaced by the Ashoka Chakra), and the debate transitioned into India's policy struggle between Gandhian village-centric economics and Nehruvian industrial modernization.

- **Way Forward**

- **Synthesis:** Modern India must find a middle path—integrating the Gandhian values of sustainability and dignity of labor with Tagore's vision of scientific temper and global engagement.
- **Modernizing Khadi:** Making traditional crafts economically viable through branding and technology without losing their soulful essence.
- **Educational Reform:** Incorporating Tagore's emphasis on creative freedom with Gandhi's emphasis on vocational training (as seen in the New Education Policy).

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

- **UPSC Mains 2023 (GS1):** "What was the difference between Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore in their approach towards education and nationalism?"
- **UPSC Mains 2021 (GS1):** "Trace the rise and growth of socio-religious reform movements with special reference to Young Bengal and Brahmo Samaj." (Context for Tagore's intellectual lineage).
- **UPSC Mains 2012:** "Discuss the Gandhi-Tagore debate on the Charkha and its relevance today."



# GANDHI vs. TAGORE:

## THE IDEOLOGICAL DEBATE ON THE CHARKHA & NATIONALISM

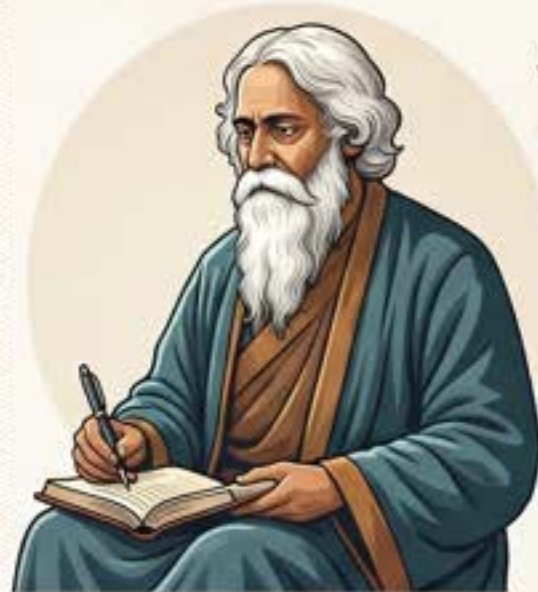
### KEY TERMS (GANDHI)

### MAIN ARGUMENTS (PRO-CHARKHA)

### KEY TERMS (TAGORE)

### MAIN ARGUMENTS (ANTI-RITUALISM)

-  **Charkha** (Self-Reliance, Swadeshi)
-  **Khadi** (boycott foreign cloth, unify)
-  **Spinning is Spiritual & Economic Necessity**
-  **Bridges Elite & Poor**
-  **Dignity of Labor** (Karma Yoga)
-  **Economic Non-Violence**



-  **Blind Nationalism** (Pride over Reason)
-  **Censure in Printer's Ink** (Imposition)
-  **Universalism** (Transcends national boundaries)
-  **Criticism of "Cult of the Charkha"**
-  **Lump of Uniformity**
-  **Fear of Isolation from Science & Progress**
-  **Freedom of Mind (Mukti)**

**Challenges**

- Impracticality
- Stakeholder Resistance

### HISTORICAL EVOLUTION

- 1915:** Disagreements emerge
- 1919-21:** Non-Cooperation Movement (Jallianwala Bagh context)
- 1924-25:** Charkha Debate Peak (Essays & Replies)
- Post-Independence:** Charkha in flag, transitioned to Policy Struggle (Gandhi vs. Nehru)

**Challenges**

- Need for Mass Production

### MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

-  **Social** (Caste Barriers vs. Suppression of Individual)
-  **Political** (Mass Mobilization vs. Personal Life Imposition)
-  **Legal** (Collective Duty vs. Freedom of Conscience)
-  **Ethical** (Moral Duty vs. Ethical Violation)
-  **Economic** (Labor-Intensive vs. Modern Machinery)
-  **Economic** (Labor-Intensive vs. Modern)
-  **International** (National Self-Sufficiency vs. World-Mind)

### WAY FORWARD (SYNTHESIS)

- Synthesize Sustainability & Scientific Temper
- Modernize Khadi (Branding)
- Educational Reform (Vocational & Creative Freedom)

### UPSC CSE Syllabus Linkages

- GS Paper 1 (History)
- GS Paper 4 (Ethics: Duty vs. Freedom)
- Essay (Nationalism, Science, Symbols)

• LEGAL

## Why 2023 law to appoint CEC came about, the legal challenge it faces

Amal Sheikh  
New Delhi, May 8

THE SUPREME COURT on Thursday described Parliament's inaction long delay in enacting a law for appointments to the Election Commission, until it was directed to do so in 2023, as "retardancy of the elected".

A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Sanjay Kumar Sharma was hearing challenges to the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023.

This law — introduced to address the legislative gap — came under legal challenge in 2024 as it removed the Chief Justice of India (CJI) from the selection panel for Election Commissioners, replacing the CJI with a Union Cabinet minister as approved by the Prime Minister.

Indeed, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Anurag Singh and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi met in February 2023 to appoint current CEC Gyanesh Kumar, Gandhi gave a dissent note, asking the government to defer appointments until the SC decided on the petitions challenging the new appointment process.

### How were Election Commissioners appointed?

Article 324C of the Constitution states that Election Commissioners should be appointed in a manner "subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf by Parliament." While the Election Commission Conditions of Service of Election Commissioners and Transition of Personnel Act, 1993, regulated salaries, tenure and the panel's functioning, it did not cover appointments.

In the absence of such a law, appointments remained under the executive's domain. The Union Law Ministry would prepare a panel, suggesting names to the PM, whose recommendations would go to the President. Over time, EC recommendations from the executive, and the senior-most EC, would usually become the CEC.

In 2022, petitions argued before the Supreme Court (*Anoop Baranwal v Union of India*) that this left appointments in the hands of the government, compromising the independence of the body tasked with conducting polls.

### What changed with the SC's *Anoop Baranwal v Union of India*?

In its March 2023 ruling in *Anoop Baranwal*, the top court laid down an interim process for appointing Election Commissioners until Parliament enacted a law.

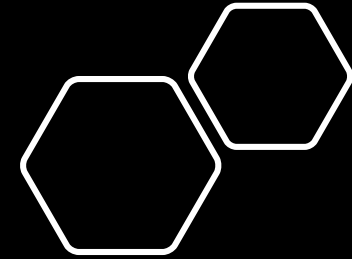
It said the President will make poll panel appointments on the advice of a three-member panel comprising the Prime Minister, Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition or leader of largest Opposition party, and the Chief Justice of India.

The decision represented a first step to ensure that decisions are made collectively, with an independent body to insulate the disinterested persons from government. The order made a "betwixt appeal" to Parliament to strengthen the Election Commission constitutionally and financially.

### What did the 2023 law on EC appointments say?

After the *Anoop Baranwal* judgment, Parliament enacted the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act in 2023. The new law replaced the CJI with a Union Cabinet minister nominated by the PM. This gave the executive representation in all three seats of the selection panel, with government ministers in two of the three seats.

Further, the Act ensures that an appointment "shall not be invalid merely by reason of any vacancy in or any defect in the constitution of the Selection Committee."



- **Key Terms and Explanations**
- **Article 324(2):** The constitutional provision that vests the appointment of the CEC and ECs in the President, "subject to the provisions of any law made in that behalf by Parliament".
- **Executive Domain:** This refers to the period (pre-2023) when the central government had the sole authority to suggest names for the ECI to the President without a formal statutory selection committee.
- **Anoop Baranwal vs. Union of India (2023):** A landmark Supreme Court judgment that filled a "legislative vacuum" by mandating a selection committee comprising the PM, Leader of Opposition (LoP), and the Chief Justice of India (CJI).
- **Tyranny of the Elected:** A phrase used by the Supreme Court to describe the Parliament's long delay (decades) in enacting a law for EC appointments, effectively keeping the power within the executive's grasp until forced by judicial intervention.
- **Selection Committee:** The statutory body created by the 2023 Act, consisting of the PM, a Union Cabinet Minister, and the LoP (or leader of the largest opposition party).

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core of the debate lies in whether the 2023 Act upholds the spirit of the *Anoop Baranwal* judgment or bypasses it.
- **The Legislative Gap:** For decades, Parliament did not enact a specific law for appointments, allowing the Union Law Ministry to suggest names directly to the PM. This was criticized for lacking transparency and potentially compromising the ECI's neutrality.
- **Judicial Intervention:** The Supreme Court argued that an independent body is essential to insulate the democratic process from executive influence. They proposed a tripartite committee (PM, LoP, CJI) as an interim measure.
- **The 2023 Legislative Response:** Parliament enacted the *Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023*. Crucially, it replaced the CJI with a Union Cabinet Minister.
- **The "Two-to-One" Problem:** Critics argue that by including a Cabinet Minister instead of the CJI, the executive maintains a 2:1 majority in the selection process, effectively retaining control over who gets appointed.
- **Protection of Appointments:** The Act includes a clause stating that appointments cannot be declared invalid simply because of a vacancy or defect in the Selection Committee's constitution.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- The journey of the ECI's appointment process reflects the evolution of Indian constitutionalism.
- **Pre-1991 (Executive Supremacy):** Appointments were made entirely at the discretion of the President (on the advice of the PM/Cabinet).
- **1991 (Conditions of Service Act):** Parliament passed the *Conditions of Service and Transaction of Business Act*, which regulated salaries and tenure but remained silent on the *appointment* process itself.
- **2022 (The Legal Challenge):** Petitioners argued that the lack of a law left the ECI vulnerable to political bias, urging the Court to intervene to protect the "basic structure" of free and fair elections.
- **March 2023 (The Interim Ruling):** The SC laid down a fair selection process involving the CJI, emphasizing that the ECI needs to be "institutionally and financially" strong.
- **Late 2023 (The New Law):** Parliament exercised its power under Article 324(2) to pass the new Act, formalizing the selection panel but removing the judicial member.
- **2024-2025 (Ongoing Friction):** Legal challenges continue, with members of the opposition (like the LoP in Feb 2025) expressing dissent over the process.

- **Way Forward**

- A balanced path to resolve the deadlock could involve:
- **Broadening the Panel:** Instead of a Cabinet Minister, perhaps a neutral figure like the Lokpal or a retired judge could be included to maintain the 1:1:1 balance.
- **Transparency:** Making the Search Committee's shortlisting criteria public to ensure that only candidates with impeccable integrity are considered.
- **Constitutional Amendment:** To permanently fix the selection process in the Constitution rather than an ordinary law, providing it higher protection from frequent legislative changes.

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

- **UPSC CSE (Mains)**

- **2023 (GS 2):** "Discuss the role of the Election Commission of India in the light of the evolution of the Model Code of Conduct."
- **2017 (GS 2):** "To enhance the quality of democracy in India the Election Commission of India has proposed electoral reforms. What are the suggested reforms and how far are they significant to make democracy purer and stronger?"
- **2012 (GS 2):** "Assess the importance of the Election Commission of India in the conduct of free and fair elections."

- **UPSC CSE (Prelims)**

- **2017:** Question regarding the appointment and tenure of the Chief Election Commissioner.

# DECODING ECI APPOINTMENT PROCESS: A GS-II ANALYSIS

## EVOLUTION OF THE ECI APPOINTMENT PROCESS

### 1. Pre-2023: Executive Supremacy



Article 324(2)



Executive had sole discretion.  
Criticized for lacking transparency.



### 2. Anoop Baranwal Case (2023): Judicial Interjection



Mandated tripartite committee (PM, fill legislative vacuum.



Mandated tripartite committee (PM, LoP, CJI) to fill legislative vacuum.



### 3. The 2023 Act: Current Legislative Framework



- Replaced CJI with a Union Minister.
- Creation of Search & Selection Committees.



### THE "TWO-TO-ONE" PROBLEM

Selection Committee: PM, Cabinet Minister, LoP



Government Majority (2:1)



Opposition Minority (1)

Critics argue this retains executive control, potentially compromising neutrality.

### CRITICAL IMPACTS OF THE 2023 ACT

- **POSITIVE:** Statutory clarity, structured search process.
- **NEGATIVE:** Executive dominance risks, divergence from judicial spirit, 'Tyranny of the Elected' concern.

### WAY FORWARD: TOWARDS GREATER INDEPENDENCE



Broadening the Panel (e.g., Lokpal, Retired Judge)



Transparency in Shortlisting

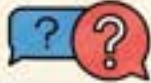


Constitutional Amendment

### LINKAGES & PREVIOUS YEARS QUESTIONS (PYQs)



- GS Paper II (Constitutional Bodies), Ethics (GS IV), Essay
- NCERT (Class 11 & 9 Civics/Political Science)
- Sample PYQs: for reference:
- Sample PYQ Constitutional Bodies), Ethics, Constlitter in Shortlisting, Carasttital TV, Saasure Prevent and stitutional Bodies.



• ECONOMICS

# The war in West Asia has hit the poor more than the rich



AS THE conflict in West Asia continues to strangle fuel and fertiliser supplies across the world, pushing up prices and the cost of living, a familiar question has resurfaced: Who gets hurt the most?

Whether one talks about individuals or families or whole economies, the short answer is that there is a stark difference between how such a crisis affects the haves and the have-nots.

In other words, often such crises create a K-shaped economy. This is a phenomenon where the economic divisions and inequalities widen with one (often small) segment of the economy tending to consume heavily while another (often large) segment struggles to even consume the staples.

## A K-shaped economy

The war in Iran is already beginning to reveal a K-shaped pattern. Economists at

the Federal Reserve Bank of New York recently analysed the way US consumers spent on fuel as pump prices started increasing.

They found the following: "In March, high-income households increased nominal spending the most and kept real consumption essentially unchanged, while low-income households decreased real consumption of gasoline but still saw sharply increased nominal spending because of the rise in gas prices."

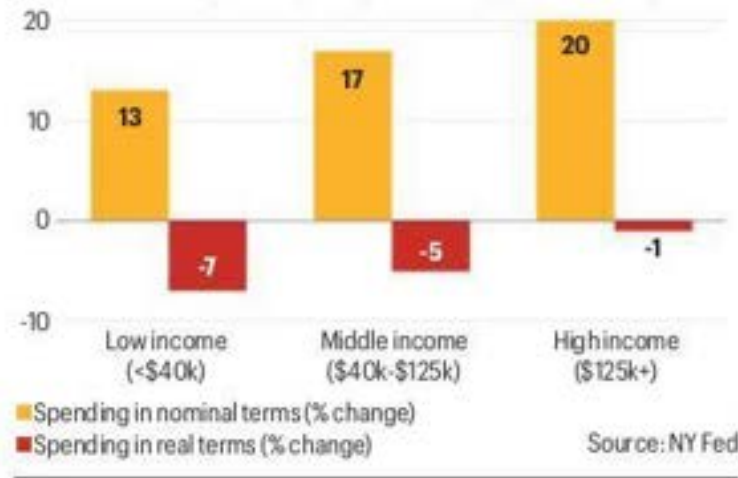
The chart alongside shows what happened to consumer consumption in March, compared to February. The poorest — US consumers earning less than \$40,000 a year — spent 13.33% more on fuel prices but this "nominal" increase in spending does not capture the "real" decline of almost 7% in spending. In other words, while the poorest spent 13% more money to buy fuel, they ended up buying 7% less actual fuel.

The middle-income earners — those earning between \$40,000 to \$125,000 a year — spent 17% more on fuel but managed to buy 5% less actual fuel.

The richest consumers managed to increase their spending by over 20% and thus ensured that their actual consumption of fuel barely changed.

## • Return of the 'K-shaped' economy

High-income US households increased spending in March (from Feb) while maintaining consumption. Low-income ones saw more spending despite cutting gas consumption.



## Why this research matters

These research results are based on a sample of 2,00,000 consumers over just one month but still they reveal something familiar. "These divergences in the response to an energy price shock are not unique to the month. Four years ago, energy

prices rose and remained elevated during the spring and summer of 2022 when the Russia-Ukraine war disrupted energy markets. The magnitude of the initial Russia-Ukraine gasoline price shock was broadly similar to the current one, but it lasted longer to date and ramped up over time," say the authors, led by Rajashri Chakrabarti.

The broader point is: As oil prices stay elevated, the poor will struggle to consume the same amount even after spending more while the rich will spend more to maintain the same level of real consumption.

Only looking at nominal spending patterns hides the deepening economic divide that happens during such crises.

This economic divide was best captured by the following quote (often attributed to poet Damian Barr) that became popular during the Covid-induced economic recession in 2020: "We are all in the same storm but not in the same boat".

Richer consumers in any country (and by the same logic, richer countries, say, Japan or South Korea) will be able to spend more in order to take a smaller hit on their actual consumption while the poor (and poorer countries such as Bangladesh or India) may end up being forced to consume less even if they spend more.

- **Key Terms and Explanations**

- **K-Shaped Economy:** A phenomenon where different sections of the economy recover or react to a crisis at different rates and in opposite directions. While one segment (usually the wealthy or tech-heavy industries) sees growth, the other (low-income workers or manual labor sectors) continues to decline.
- **Nominal Spending:** The actual amount of money spent on goods or services, not adjusted for inflation. *Example: Spending ₹100 on petrol today versus ₹80 last year is an increase in nominal spending.*
- **Real Spending/Consumption:** The quantity of goods or services purchased, adjusted for price changes. This reflects the actual "utility" or volume gained. *Example: If you spend more money but get fewer liters of fuel, your real consumption has decreased.*
- **Energy Price Shock:** A sudden and significant increase in the price of energy (oil, gas, electricity) often caused by supply disruptions due to war or political instability.
- **Income Brackets:** Categories used to group households based on their annual earnings, typically divided into low, middle, and high income to analyze economic behavior.

- **Main Arguments and Substantive Parts**

- The core thesis posits that global crises, such as the conflict in West Asia, do not affect all economic actors equally; instead, they exacerbate existing inequalities, creating a "K-shaped" outcome.
- **Disproportionate Impact on the Poor:** Low-income households are forced to increase their nominal spending just to survive, yet their real consumption of essentials (like fuel) drops significantly.
- **Resilience of the Rich:** High-income individuals can afford to increase their spending by a large margin to maintain their standard of living. Their "real consumption" remains nearly unchanged despite rising costs.
- **The "Same Storm, Different Boats" Fallacy:** While a global crisis affects everyone (the storm), the "boats" (economic resources) determine survival. Richer nations and individuals have "sturdier boats" than poorer ones.
- **The Middle-Class Squeeze:** Middle-income earners occupy a precarious middle ground, spending significantly more but still seeing a moderate decline in their actual consumption.

- **Historical Evolution of the Issue**
- **Pre-1970s:** Energy prices were relatively stable, and global economic growth was more synchronized.
- **1973 & 1979 Oil Shocks:** The first major instances where West Asian instability led to global "Stagflation," hitting developing economies and the poor hardest.
- **2008 Financial Crisis:** Highlighted the initial "K-shaped" divergence, where financial markets recovered via bailouts while the working class faced long-term unemployment.
- **2020 COVID-19 Pandemic:** The term "K-shaped recovery" gained mainstream prominence as tech and professional sectors thrived while service and manual labor sectors collapsed.
- **2022 Russia-Ukraine War:** Triggered a massive energy shock similar to current West Asian tensions, leading to sustained high prices that disproportionately burdened low-income households globally.
- **2024-2026 West Asian Conflict:** Represents the current phase where persistent geopolitical friction maintains elevated inflation, cementing the K-shaped divide.
  
- **Way Forward**
- **Targeted Subsidies:** Move away from universal subsidies to Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT) for the bottom 40% to protect their real consumption.
- **Energy Diversification:** Speed up the transition to renewables to reduce dependence on the volatile West Asian energy market.
- **Progressive Taxation:** Implement "Windfall Taxes" on energy companies profiting from the crisis to fund social safety nets.
- **Global Cooperation:** Create a "Global Energy Fund" to assist developing nations like Bangladesh and India during price shocks.
  
- **Previous Years' Questions (PYQs)**
- **UPSC Mains 2017 (GS 3):** "What are the reasons for the nearly stagnant share of manufacturing sector in GDP? How is it a challenge for inclusive growth?" (Theme: Structural inequality).
- **UPSC Mains 2021 (GS 3):** "Explain the difference between computing methodology of India's GDP before and after 2015." (Theme: Measuring real vs. nominal growth).
- **UPSC Mains 2020 (GS 2):** "The critical determinants of shaping India's relations with West Asia."
- **APSC Mains 2022:** "Discuss the impact of global inflation on the common man in Assam."



**AXIA**  
IAS ACADEMY  
RISE ABOVE THE REST

# GEOPOLITICAL SHOCKS & THE K-SHAPED ECONOMY: A COMPREHENSIVE UPSC CSE ANALYSIS

## KEY TERMS

1. K-Shaped Economy   2. Nominal Spending   3. Real Consumption   4. Energy Price Shock   5. Global powers



## HISTORICAL EVOLUTION



**1970s Oil Shocks**  
• Fuel queues soar fuel price and queues with fuel queues



**2008 Financial Crisis**  
• Broken graphs  
• Broken financial crisis  
• Broken graphs



**COVID-19**  
Antine wisdom from masked answers seeds

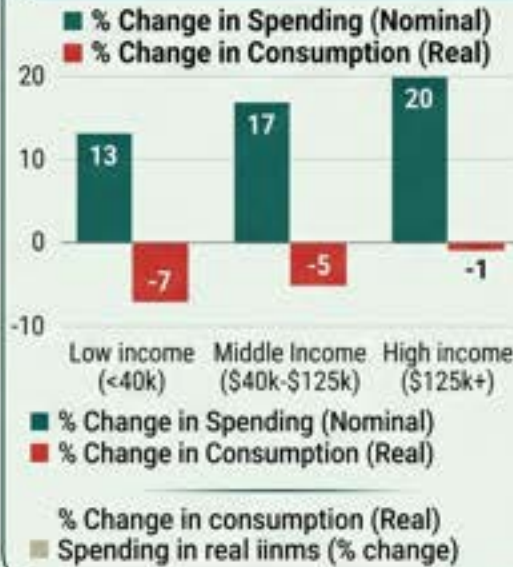
**2020 COVID-19**  
• Digital shift  
• Gnanaka  
• Digital shift



**2022-2024 Energy Shocks**  
• Geopolitical  
• Economic  
• Rising prices



## THE DIVERGENCE: K-SHAPED IMPACT ANALYSIS



### POOR GET HURT MORE

- Increased nominal spending
- Decreased real consumption
- High income maintaining consumption

*"We are all in the same storm, but not in the same boat"*



## MULTIDIMENSIONAL ANALYSIS

<p><b>Social</b> Inequality, health, and education cuts</p>	<p><b>Political</b> • Populism, social unrest</p>
<p><b>Economic</b> Cost-push inflation, trade imbalances</p>	<p><b>Ethical</b> • Moral hazard of resource access</p>
<p><b>Ethical</b> Energy as a right</p>	<p><b>Legal</b> • Most affordable rights</p>
<p><b>Legal</b> Energy as a right</p>	<p><b>International</b> • North-South divide, global cooperation</p>
<p><b>International</b> North-South divide cooperation</p>	

## WAY FORWARD

### SOLUTION & REFORMS



## LINKAGES & PYQs

**NCERT** Economy & Pol. Sci.

**UPSC GS Papers** GS1, 2, 3, 4, Essay

**PYQs** Date (fst al. 2024, Jan 12, 2024)  
Date (Koevam, Oct 14, 2024)  
Relevant I, 2023 (Dep 25, 2024)



# AXIA

## IAS ACADEMY

RISE ABOVE THE REST

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

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

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

**+91 6002-417488**