

UPSC with SAURABH KAUSHIK

Current Affairs Notes · 19 June 2026

The Hindu · Indian Express · PIB Highlights | 25 Topics | GS 1 · 2 · 3 + Prelims + Mapping

[TH] The Hindu

[IE] Indian Express

[PIB] Press Info Bureau

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PIB HIGHLIGHTS — 18/19 JUNE 2026

Khaan Quest 2026 — Indian Army to Mongolia for UN Peacekeeping Exercise

✓ Indian Army contingent (40 personnel, Jat Regiment + other arms) departed June 18 for Exercise Khaan Quest 2026.

- ✓ Location: Five Hills Training Area, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Dates: June 20 – July 3, 2026.
- ✓ 23rd edition. Origin: Bilateral exercise between USA and Mongolian Defence Forces (2003); expanded to multinational peacekeeping exercise from 2006.
- ✓ Focus: UN peacekeeping operations under Chapter VII of the UN Charter — joint planning, checkpoint establishment, cordon-and-search, CIED drills, casualty evacuation, civilian evacuation.
- ✓ India's participation reflects its status as the world's largest UN peacekeeping troop contributor (India has contributed 180,000+ troops since 1950 to UN missions).
- ✓ India-Mongolia ties: Mongolia declared India its 'spiritual neighbour'; India is a key partner in Mongolia's 'third neighbour' policy (seeking partners outside China and Russia); bilateral trade ~\$23 million (small but growing).
- ✓ GS 3 Angle: UN Peacekeeping Chapter VII; India-Mongolia strategic partnership; military exercises and interoperability.

Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi — India's Dual Heritage-Development Approach

- ✓ PIB backgrounder released highlighting 12 years of India's 'Vikas Bhi, Virasat Bhi' (Development Too, Heritage Too) philosophy — simultaneous modernisation and cultural preservation.
- ✓ Infrastructure at heritage sites: PM Gati Shakti-enabled connectivity to 50+ heritage tourism circuits; airports near Varanasi (Lal Bahadur Shastri International), Puri (upgraded), and Ayodhya (new Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram Airport).
- ✓ Key projects: Kashi Vishwanath Corridor (Varanasi); Ram Mandir complex (Ayodhya); Mahakal Lok (Ujjain); Kedarnath reconstruction; Ekta Nagar (Statue of Unity, Vadodara).
- ✓ Digital heritage: Archaeological Survey of India's digital artefact database; National Archives digitisation; NAMAMI GANGE cultural documentation.
- ✓ Constitutional basis: Article 49 (Directive Principle) — State shall protect monuments, places, and objects of historical or artistic importance; Article 51A(f) — Fundamental Duty to value and preserve India's rich heritage.
- ✓ International recognition: UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India: 42 (as of 2024); India has the highest number of intangible cultural heritage elements recognised by UNESCO among large democracies.
- ✓ GS 1 Angle: Art & Culture; Indian heritage; government schemes for cultural preservation; archaeological sites.

GS PAPER 2 — Governance · Polity

1. Telegram Evolved Into the 'New Dark Web', Govt. Tells Delhi HC

[TH] Page 1

GS 2: Governance: Regulation of Social Media and Intermediaries; IT Act; Cybercrime; Dark Web; Privacy and Security.

- ▶ The Central Government told the Delhi High Court that Telegram has 'evolved into the new dark web' — hosting criminal networks that organise drug trafficking, exam paper leaks, child sexual abuse material, and financial fraud.
- ▶ Government's affidavit (filed June 18, 2026): Telegram has 'structural and functional features that make it a preferred platform for organised crime' and NTA/CBI investigations into NEET-2026 confirmed Telegram channels as the primary distribution medium.
- ▶ The HC also noted that despite prior warnings from NTA (months before the NEET re-examination), Telegram did not take down channels distributing exam materials.
- ▶ Telegram CEO Pavel Durov's response: The platform uses AI and human moderators to remove illegal content; the company has been gradually closing criminal channels; Durov separately claimed India's June 2026 block involved 'BGP hijacking' (disputed by MeitY).

What is the 'Dark Web' Context?

- Dark web: The part of the internet accessible only through special software (like Tor — The Onion Router) and not indexed by standard search engines; historically associated with illegal marketplaces, child exploitation material, hacking services, and drug trafficking.
- The government's 'new dark web' claim: Telegram has features that replicate the dark web's operational advantages within the mainstream internet — large anonymous channels (unlimited subscribers, anonymous admin), encrypted chats, bots for automated service delivery, no KYC for account creation, and limited law enforcement cooperation.
- Specifically, NCPCR (National Commission for Protection of Child Rights) has identified Telegram channels distributing CSAM (Child Sexual Abuse Material) in India; NIA has tracked jihadist content on Telegram; state police have documented drug sales via Telegram bot networks.

The Section 69A Framework: Key Aspects

- Section 69A authorises blocking when national security, sovereignty, public order, or prevention of cognizable offence is at stake. The court is examining whether Telegram's structural features (inability to quickly identify and block specific channels, no India office, no compliance officer) constitute an ongoing public order threat that justifies extended blocking.
- The June 16–22 block: Temporary block for NEET re-exam has expired; government is now seeking a more structured 'regulatory framework' from Telegram rather than another broad block. The HC has directed Telegram to submit a compliance affidavit within 4 weeks.
- NTA chief (Pradeep Joshi): Admitted Telegram was warned 'several times' before the blanket block; the warning included specific channel names circulating NEET 2026 materials; Telegram's response was 'inadequate' — some channels were removed but new ones appeared within hours.

★ UPSC ANGLE

• Dark web vs. Surface web vs. Deep web: Three-tier classification: (1) Surface web — indexed by Google, publicly accessible; (2) Deep web — not indexed, but legitimate (banking portals, private databases); (3) Dark web — requires special software, associated with anonymity and illegal activity. Telegram is on the surface web but mimics dark web operational features.

• Intermediary Liability (IT Rules 2021): Platforms with 5 million+ users in India are 'Significant Social Media Intermediaries' (SSMIs) — must appoint Resident Grievance Officer, Nodal Contact Person (all India-based), and Chief Compliance Officer; Telegram has NOT done this — which is the basis for legal action.

• Global regulatory context: EU Digital Services Act (DSA, 2023) — large platforms must remove illegal content within 24 hours; Telegram was investigated under DSA in 2024; Pavel Durov was arrested in France (August 2024) and then released — Telegram significantly increased moderation post-arrest.

- **SSMI (Significant Social Media Intermediary)** — Under IT Rules 2021 — any social media intermediary with 5 million+ registered users in India; must comply with strict content moderation, officer appointment, and transparency requirements; Telegram qualifies but has not fully complied.
- **Dark Web** — The part of the internet accessible only through anonymising software (like Tor); not indexed by search engines; historically used for illegal activities; the government's 'new dark web' characterisation of Telegram is a regulatory framing, not a technical classification.

2. Governor's Address Reiterates Tamil Nadu's Long-Held Stand on 2-Language Policy

[TH] Page 4

GS 2: Indian Polity: Centre-State Relations; Governor's Role; Language Policy; NEP 2020; Constitutional Provisions (Article 345, 347); 3-Language Formula.

► Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi (appointed 2021; controversial tenure) was replaced by CV Ananda Bose in 2023; the current Governor (as of 2026) delivered the customary joint address to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly.

► The address explicitly reiterates Tamil Nadu's '2-language policy' — Tamil and English — as the state's official stance, rejecting the National Education Policy 2020's 3-language formula.

- ▶ Tamil Nadu is the only state that formally maintains a 2-language policy; it opposes mandatory Hindi teaching (3rd language under NEP 2020) as an imposition of Hindi cultural dominance.
- ▶ This triggers a perennial constitutional tension: Education is in the Concurrent List (List III, Entry 25) — both Centre and State can legislate; but the Union government's NEP is a policy document, not law.

The Tamil Nadu Language Policy: Historical Background

- The anti-Hindi agitation (1937–40, 1965): Tamil Nadu's language politics is defined by two major movements: Periyar's 1937 movement against the introduction of Hindi in Madras schools (Rajaji government); and the 1965 anti-Hindi agitation (triggered by the replacement of English by Hindi as the official language) — which resulted in 3 deaths and ultimately led to the Official Languages (Amendment) Act 1967 that perpetuated English as an additional official language indefinitely.
- The current Tamil Nadu policy: A 1953 order by C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) and subsequent orders establish Tamil and English as the medium of instruction; the state has maintained this consistently through both DMK and AIADMK governments.
- NEP 2020's 3-language formula: NEP recommends learning at least 3 languages — mother tongue + Hindi + English — in schools until Class 8. Tamil Nadu (and Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha) object to the mandatory Hindi component.

The Constitutional Dimension

- Article 345: A State Legislature may by law adopt any one or more languages used in the State or Hindi as official language for all official purposes. Tamil Nadu has adopted Tamil.
- Article 351: Directive to spread and develop Hindi. The Union government uses this to promote Hindi — but it is a directive, not an enforceable mandate on states.
- Article 30 (Minority educational institutions): Tamil-medium minority institutions have constitutional protection for their medium of instruction.
- Parliamentary language committee vs. State autonomy: The issue is that education (Concurrent List) means both Centre and State can make law; NEP as a policy document has no legal force — states are not obligated to follow it unless Parliament enacts a specific law (which it has not on the 3-language formula).

★ UPSC ANGLE

- NEP 2020 and 3-language formula: NEP 2020 recommends — not mandates — a 3-language formula; states retain the right to choose; Tamil Nadu's formal 2-language policy is constitutionally permissible under the concurrent list framework.
- Centre-State tensions in education: NEP, CUET (central university entrance), NET (national eligibility test) — all centralising trends in education that Southern states resist as undermining state languages and education policy autonomy.
- Governor's role: The Governor delivers the customary address to the Assembly — the content of the address reflects the Cabinet's position (per constitutional convention); the Governor's address reiterating the 2-language policy means the state government's position is unambiguous.

- 🗝️ **Concurrent List Entry 25** — Education, including technical education, medical education, and universities — both Parliament and State Legislatures can make laws; Union law prevails in case of inconsistency.
- 🗝️ **3-Language Formula** — Recommendation in NEP 2020 that school students learn at least 3 languages — including Hindi (or another modern Indian language) — from primary school; opposed by South Indian states as de facto Hindi imposition.

3. NFHS-6 Reveals Progress Amid Nutrition Challenges

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GS 2: Social Justice: Health and Nutrition; NFHS; Women and Child Development; Anaemia; Malnutrition; Government Schemes.

- ▶ NFHS-6 (National Family Health Survey, 2023-24) released May 2026 — The Hindu's June 19 deep-dive focuses on the nutrition component.

- Progress: Stunting 35.5% → 29.3%; wasting improved marginally; institutional deliveries 88.6% → 90.6%; full immunisation 83.8% → 87.1%.
- Challenge: Anaemia prevalence remains high — children 6-59 months: 67.1% anaemic (marginal improvement from 67.5%); women 15-49: 58.3% → 57.0% (minimal change).
- Double burden: Some states face both undernutrition (stunting, anaemia) and overnutrition (overweight, obesity) — 'nutrition transition'.

The Anaemia Paradox

- India's anaemia burden is enormous: ~58% of women of reproductive age (15–49) are anaemic; ~67% of children under 5. This has remained stubbornly high despite multiple targeted interventions.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan: Since 2018, has achieved dramatic improvements in stunting (6.2 percentage points fall in 5 years — among fastest globally) but has not made equivalent progress on anaemia.
- Why anaemia is harder to address: Iron deficiency anemia (IDA) requires dietary changes (iron-rich foods: leafy vegetables, lentils, meat) + vitamin C for absorption + cooking in iron vessels; cultural food taboos, poor dietary diversity, and poor bioavailability of plant-based iron make this harder than caloric sufficiency.
- Anaemia interventions: Iron and Folic Acid (IFA) supplementation (free through ASHA workers); WIFS (Weekly Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation) programme for adolescent girls; food fortification (rice, wheat flour, salt, edible oil with micronutrients).

Double Burden States

- Nutrition transition is evident in states like Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu — which have near-zero stunting rates but growing rates of overweight and obesity among women (26.7% overweight nationally; 24.2% obese).
- This creates a 'double burden' — the same healthcare system must address chronic undernutrition in some population segments while managing diet-related chronic diseases (diabetes, hypertension) in others.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- SDG 2 targets: Zero hunger — stunting under 10% by 2030; India at 29.3% has a long way to go despite rapid progress; anaemia reduction is on SDG 3 (good health) pathway.
- ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services): India's flagship early childhood nutrition programme — Anganwadi centres provide supplementary nutrition, health check-ups, immunisation, and pre-school education; NFHS-6 data will inform ICDS restructuring.
- POSHAN Tracker: MoWCD's real-time monitoring of beneficiary data from Anganwadi centres; 13 crore+ beneficiaries tracked; used to direct interventions to worst-performing districts.
- ✦ **NFHS (National Family Health Survey)** — Comprehensive demographic and health survey conducted by IIPS (Mumbai) under MoHFW; every 4–5 years; generates key health, nutrition, and demographic data for policy; NFHS-6 covers 2023-24.
- ✦ **Stunting** — Low height-for-age in children under 5 — indicator of chronic malnutrition; fell from 35.5% to 29.3% in NFHS-6; SDG target: below 10% by 2030.
- ✦ **Anaemia (Iron Deficiency)** — Insufficient haemoglobin due to iron deficiency; affects 58.3% of women 15-49 and 67.1% of children 6-59 months; has not declined significantly despite interventions; requires dietary diversity + iron supplementation.

GS PAPER 2 — International Relations

4. BRICS NSA Meeting in Delhi (June 22-23): Wang Yi, Russia, Iran to Attend

[IE] Page 1

GS 2: International Relations: BRICS; India's BRICS Chairship 2026; NSA meetings; India-China relations; multilateralism; geopolitics.

- ▶ BRICS National Security Advisors (NSA) Meeting to be held in New Delhi on June 22-23, 2026 — hosted by India as BRICS Chair for 2026.
- ▶ China's attendee: Wang Yi (Foreign Minister and Politburo member; highest-ranking Chinese diplomat) — in his capacity as China's NSA-equivalent.
- ▶ India's NSA Ajit Doval will preside. Russia's Nikolai Patrushev, Iran's Ali Ahmadian (IRGC-linked), and NSAs of all 11 BRICS members to attend.
- ▶ Agenda: Counter-terrorism; cyber security; energy security (post-Muscat Accord); Israel-Gaza; West Asia stabilisation; AI governance in security; UN reform.

BRICS 2026: India's Chairship Priorities

- India assumed the rotating BRICS Chair on January 1, 2026 — the second time India chairs the group (previous: 2012 New Delhi). India's 2026 BRICS theme: 'Responsive BRICS for a Secure Future.'
- India's 3 priorities as BRICS Chair: (1) Counter-terrorism — multilateral action against cross-border terrorism (specifically Pakistan-linked networks after Operation Sindoor); (2) Energy Security — post-Hormuz energy supply resilience for BRICS members; (3) Digital/AI Governance — India's MANAV framework as a BRICS standard.

Why Wang Yi's Attendance Is Significant



- Wang Yi is China's Foreign Minister AND Director of the CPC's Office of the Foreign Affairs Commission — essentially China's most powerful diplomatic official. His attendance as 'NSA-equivalent' is a diplomatic signal of Beijing's serious engagement with India under the BRICS Chair.
- India-China bilateral: India-China disengagement at LAC friction points (Galwan, Depsang, Demchok) has been proceeding since late 2024; the NSA meeting is an opportunity for Wang Yi-Doval bilateral conversations — potentially including a new round of Special Representative talks on the boundary question.
- India's diplomatic positioning: India chairs a meeting that includes China (with whom it has border tensions), Russia (which it buys oil from under sanctions), Iran (the US-war adversary with whom India has the Chabahar deal), and Saudi Arabia (both a US ally and India's energy partner) — a truly multi-polar diplomatic moment.


BRICS NSA Meeting: What to Expect

- Counter-terrorism: India will push for a BRICS joint statement naming specific Pakistan-based terrorist organisations (Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed); China may resist naming Pakistan-linked groups; this is a perennial India-China tension within BRICS.
- Energy security: Post-Muscat Accord, BRICS members collectively import enormous volumes of Gulf oil; a BRICS energy security framework — alternative routing, mutual stockpile agreements — is on the agenda.
- AI in security: India's MANAV framework + China's own AI governance proposals + Russia's perspective will create a triangular AI governance discussion.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- BRICS expansion (2024): BRICS expanded from 5 to 11 members in 2024 — adding UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Indonesia; India now chairs a group that includes OPEC members, the world's largest oil producers, and the US-war adversary (Iran); this makes the NSA meeting particularly consequential.
- NSA Meeting significance: BRICS NSA meetings are the 'Political and Security Pillar' of BRICS cooperation; separate from the economic and financial pillars; deals with hard security issues; the Doval-Wang Yi dynamic will be closely watched.
- India-China SR Talks: Special Representative (SR) Talks on the India-China boundary question have been ongoing since 2003; the 25th round is overdue; Wang Yi's New Delhi visit may finalise a date — potentially a diplomatic breakthrough ahead of the BRICS Leaders' Summit.

-  **BRICS** — Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa + UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Indonesia (expanded 2024); 11 members; 46% of world population, 36% of global GDP (PPP); rotating chairship; India chairs in 2026.
-  **BRICS NSA Meeting** — High-level security dialogue among BRICS members' National Security Advisors; covers counter-terrorism, cyber security, and geopolitical issues; part of BRICS Political and Security Pillar.

-  **Special Representative (SR) Talks** — India-China bilateral mechanism for boundary question negotiations; 24 rounds completed; Ajit Doval (India) and Wang Yi (China) are the current Special Representatives.

5. Iran Deal: Economic Lifeline + Flashpoints That Remain

[IE] Page 1

GS 2: International Relations: US-Iran Muscat Accord; West Asia; Nuclear Non-Proliferation; energy security; India's strategic interests.

- ▶ The Muscat Accord (signed June 14, 2026) gives Iran a critical economic lifeline after 3.5 months of US naval blockade and sanctions enforcement.
- ▶ Iran's GDP contracted ~15% in Q1 2026 due to oil export stoppage; inflation exceeded 120%; food shortages in some provinces; the Accord reverses this immediately.
- ▶ BUT: Multiple flashpoints remain that could re-escalate within the 60-day window.
- ▶ Key flashpoints: (1) Nuclear enrichment — Iran has 440+ kg of 60%-enriched uranium; August 13 deadline for a cap deal; (2) Israeli spoiler risk; (3) IRGC independent operations; (4) Lebanon-Hezbollah ceasefire fragility.

Iran's Economic Relief — The Numbers

- Oil export resumption: Iran was producing ~3.2 million barrels/day (mbd) before the war; production had fallen to ~1.8 mbd during the blockade; restoration to pre-war levels will take 2–3 months (wells take time to bring back to full capacity).
- Frozen assets: \$5–7 billion released immediately (South Korea tranche); \$180 billion total assets to be released in tranches over 3 years upon compliance. Iran's economy was running a \$30 billion quarterly deficit during the blockade — the asset releases are critical for stabilisation.
- Sanctions suspension: OFAC issued 'general licences' for Iranian oil exports, petrochemicals, and food/medical goods — reversing the most economically damaging sanction categories immediately.


The Flashpoints

- **Nuclear enrichment deadline (August 13):** The hardest issue — Iran must agree to: (a) cap enrichment at 3.67%; (b) dismantle or convert surplus centrifuges; (c) reduce its 440 kg of 60%-enriched uranium to under 202 kg (the JCPOA limit). Iran has agreed to 'freeze' at current levels during negotiations — but permanent cap is the Phase 2 requirement.
- **Israeli spoiler risk:** Israel is NOT party to the Muscat Accord; Netanyahu government considers any deal that allows Iran to retain enrichment capability existentially dangerous; Israel has demonstrated willingness to strike Iranian nuclear infrastructure — a unilateral Israeli strike on Fordow or Natanz could collapse the deal.
- **IRGC operational autonomy:** Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps operates with significant autonomy from the Foreign Ministry; IRGC hardliners may conduct operations (Hezbollah arms shipments, mining Hormuz approaches, Houthi support) that technically violate the Accord's spirit even if Khamenei nominally supports the deal.
- **Lebanon-Hezbollah ceasefire:** The Accord includes an implicit Lebanon ceasefire; but Hezbollah's military wing is not directly controlled by Tehran; Israeli-Hezbollah clashes along the southern Lebanon border continue; any major escalation could trigger Iranian retaliation and collapse the deal.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- Sequencing of sanctions relief is key: If the US releases too much economic relief too quickly (without verifiable Iranian compliance), Iran has less incentive to compromise on nuclear issues in Phase 2; the architecture of sequenced sanctions relief is the Accord's most delicate design element.
- India's contingency planning: India's Energy Ministry, PPAC (Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell), and RBI must plan for both scenarios: (a) Accord holds → oil prices stay \$85–95/barrel, rupee stabilises; (b) Accord collapses by August 13 → prices spike above \$120 again, rupee pressure resumes. Both contingencies require different policy responses.

- Saudi Arabia's calculus: Saudi Arabia's own supply decisions will shape the post-Accord oil market; if Saudi OPEC+ cuts remain in place, oil prices may not fall as much as the market has priced in; India must monitor OPEC+ decisions closely.

-  **OFAC General Licence** — A type of US sanctions authorisation that broadly permits a class of transactions (rather than case-by-case specific licences); the Muscat Accord required OFAC to issue specific general licences for Iranian oil, petrochemicals, and food exports.
-  **60-Day Window (Phase 2)** — The negotiation period (June 19 – August 13) for the comprehensive nuclear deal under the Muscat Accord; if no deal by August 13, Iran may resume enrichment and US may reimpose sanctions/blockade.

6. Iran's MoU Opens Door for Claims Over the Strait of Hormuz

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GS 1 / GS 2: GS 1 (Places in News): Strait of Hormuz, Persian Gulf, international waterways; GS 2 (IR): UNCLOS, freedom of navigation, Iran's claims, India's energy security.


- ▶ The Hindu analysis: A subtle but dangerous provision in the Muscat Accord — Iran was allowed to include language acknowledging its 'sovereign rights' over the Strait of Hormuz approach.
- ▶ The concern: UNCLOS Part III (Straits Regime) establishes 'transit passage' through international straits as an inalienable right of all ships; coastal states CANNOT impose conditions, tolls, or sovereignty-based restrictions on transit.
- ▶ Iran's long-held position: Iran considers Hormuz within its 'zone of responsibility' and has claimed rights to regulate (not block) transit — including the right to stop and inspect vessels suspected of carrying contraband.
- ▶ The Accord's concession: US agreed to language recognising Iran's 'security interests' in the Strait — a subtle departure from the blanket 'freedom of navigation' framing.


UNCLOS and the Strait of Hormuz

- Hormuz geography: The Strait is approximately 33–55 km wide at its narrowest point; shared between Iran and Oman; the shipping lanes are within Iran's territorial waters on the northern side and Oman's territorial waters on the southern side.
- UNCLOS Art. 37–44 (Straits Regime): States bordering straits used for international navigation CANNOT suspend transit passage; ships have the right of 'continuous and expeditious' transit; the coastal state may designate sea lanes and traffic separation schemes but cannot charge fees or require prior notification.
- Iran's historical position: Iran has consistently argued it has rights to regulate — not prohibit — transit through Hormuz, citing national security concerns; this position has never been internationally accepted. The Accord's 'sovereign rights' language is a diplomatic concession that could be used by Iran to justify future inspections and tolling claims.
- India's vulnerability: 40%+ of India's crude transits Hormuz; any future Iranian claim to 'regulate' transit (including inspecting Indian-flagged tankers or charging fees) would directly harm India's energy security; India should have demanded explicit 'no tolls, no inspection rights over neutral vessels' language in the Accord.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- This is a subtle but important UPSC-relevant point: The Hormuz reopening is good for India NOW, but the Accord's sovereignty language may create future legal complications for free navigation. India must raise this bilaterally with the US and in the IMO.
- UNCLOS and India: India ratified UNCLOS in 1995; the Strait of Hormuz dispute is a test of UNCLOS's Straits Regime provisions; India's position is consistent with UNCLOS — any sovereign claim to regulate transit passage is legally invalid under the Treaty.

-  **Transit Passage (UNCLOS Art. 38)** — The right of all ships to continuous and expeditious transit through straits used for international navigation; cannot be suspended by the coastal state; stronger than 'innocent passage' in territorial waters.

-  **Territorial Sea** — The 12 nautical mile zone from a country's coast where the coastal state has sovereignty; ships have the right of innocent passage; the Strait of Hormuz's shipping lanes pass through Iran's territorial sea on the north side.

7. India-UK CETA's Double Contribution Convention Saves \$500 Million for Indians

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GS 2 / GS 3: IR: India–UK CETA; Social Security Agreement; professional mobility; bilateral trade; GS 3: Economy — services trade, IT sector.

- ▶ The India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement's Double Contribution Convention (DCC) — entering force July 15, 2026 — will save Indian professionals ~\$500 million annually in social security costs.
- ▶ Current situation: Indian IT workers sent to the UK on temporary assignments must pay into BOTH India's EPFO (provident fund) AND the UK's National Insurance (NI) system — a 'dual contribution' burden.
- ▶ DCC effect: Indian professionals on temporary assignments in the UK will be exempt from UK National Insurance contributions for up to 5 years (extended from 3 years in the existing partial arrangement).
- ▶ Benefit: \$500 million annual saving shared between 75,000+ Indian professionals and their employers (Indian IT companies and UK-based subsidiaries).

Social Security Agreements: How They Work

- Social security totalization agreements (also called double contribution conventions): Bilateral treaties that prevent workers from paying social security taxes in two countries simultaneously during temporary assignments; the home country's social security system covers the worker; host country contributions are waived.
- India's existing agreements: India has Social Security Agreements (SSAs) with ~20 countries — Japan, South Korea, Australia, Germany, France, Belgium, Czech Republic, Hungary, Norway, Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Portugal, Switzerland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Austria, Canada, Qatar, and now UK.
- UK's National Insurance: Employers pay ~13.8% of employee salary as NI; employees pay ~8–12%; for a typical Indian IT professional earning £60,000/year, this means ~£12,000–18,000 in combined NI contributions — the DCC eliminates this for temporary assignments.
- Scope: 75,000+ Indian professionals on temporary UK assignments; 900+ Indian companies with UK operations benefit; the IT sector (TCS, Infosys, Wipro, HCL each have thousands of employees in the UK) is the primary beneficiary.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- India's services export advantage: The DCC reinforces India's competitive position in IT and professional services exports to the UK — by reducing the effective cost of sending Indian workers to the UK temporarily, it makes Indian IT companies more competitive against local UK firms.
- CETA vs. CEPA terminology: India uses 'CETA' (Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement) for the India-UK deal; some sources call it FTA; the PM's office officially calls it CETA; distinct from India's CEPAs (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements) with UAE, Australia, Mauritius.
-  **Double Contribution Convention (DCC)** — The Social Security component of India-UK CETA; prevents dual NI + EPFO contributions for Indian professionals on temporary UK assignments; effective July 15, 2026; exemption period extended to 5 years.
-  **National Insurance (UK)** — UK's state social security system — covers healthcare, retirement pensions, unemployment benefits; employer contribution ~13.8%, employee contribution ~8–12% of salary; waived under DCC for Indian temporary workers.

8. Amit Shah Meets US Envoy Gor: Terrorism, Narcotics, Security Discussed

[TH/IE] Page 14

GS 3: Internal Security: Counter-terrorism; India-US security cooperation; narcotics trafficking; cross-border terrorism.

- ▶ Union Home Minister Amit Shah held discussions with US Ambassador to India Eric Garcetti (successor; Gor was a previous appointee — current US Ambassador in June 2026 context).
- ▶ Key agenda items: Terrorism (specifically post-Operation Sindoor cross-border networks; Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed); narcotics trafficking (Afghanistan-Pakistan-India drug route; Dark Net/Telegram drug sales).
- ▶ Both sides agreed to expand the Counterterrorism Cooperation Initiative (CTCI) to include intelligence-sharing on Telegram-based networks.
- ▶ India flagged concerns about designated global terrorist Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar continuing to operate freely in Pakistan — US reiterated commitment to press Pakistan for action.

- India-US counter-terrorism cooperation: Has deepened post-Operation Sindoor (May 2025); US has accepted India's dossiers on Pakistani-origin terrorist organisations; the 26/11 Mumbai attacks case (David Headley-Tahawwur Rana) extradition trial is ongoing in a US court.
- Narcotics nexus: Afghanistan produces ~90% of global opium/heroin; Baluchistan and Pakistani Punjab are transit routes to India; NCA (National Crime Agency, UK), DEA (US Drug Enforcement Administration), and NCB India have been cooperating on the Golden Crescent drug network.
- 1930 National Cyber Crime Helpline: Shah directed upgrades to the helpline specifically to address online drug sales and fraud via platforms like Telegram.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- Pakistan's designation as State Sponsor of Terrorism: India has long advocated this; US has been reluctant (strategic Pakistan relationship for Afghanistan etc.); post-Operation Sindoor, US-India convergence on Pakistan-linked terrorism has increased.
- Tahawwur Rana extradition: 26/11 accused Tahawwur Rana is facing extradition proceedings in the US (appealing to the Supreme Court); extradition would be a major diplomatic victory for India.

GS PAPER 3 — Economy · Science · Security

9. Direct Tax Collection Grows 15% to Over Rs 5.21 Lakh Crore in FY26

[IE] Page 17

GS 3: Indian Economy: Public Finance; Taxation; Direct and Indirect Taxes; Tax-to-GDP Ratio; Fiscal Management.

- ▶ Income Tax Department data: Net direct tax collection in FY2025-26 (April 2025 – March 2026): Rs 5.21 lakh crore — 15.1% year-on-year growth.
- ▶ Direct tax: Rs 5.21 lakh crore; Indirect tax (GST + customs + excise): ~Rs 11.23 lakh crore; Total tax receipts FY26: ~Rs 16.44 lakh crore.
- ▶ Direct tax composition: Personal income tax (PIT) ~Rs 3.52 lakh crore (largest component); Corporate tax ~Rs 1.47 lakh crore; STT + others ~Rs 0.22 lakh crore.
- ▶ India's tax-to-GDP ratio: ~11.5% (FY26) — improving but still below the OECD average (~33%) and peer economies.

- Personal income tax surge: PIT growth driven by: wage growth in the formal sector; widening of the taxpayer base (number of ITRs filed grew to 8.9 crore in AY2025-26 from 8.18 crore in AY2024-25); improved 26AS-based pre-filled forms improving compliance.
- Corporate tax: Slower growth (8.5% YoY) reflecting: compressed margins in some sectors (Hormuz-related cost pressures; global growth slowdown); partial offset from strong profitability in oil/energy PSUs post-Hormuz.

- TDS digitisation: Faceless Assessment, Annual Information Statement (AIS), and pre-filled ITRs have reduced evasion; ~43 lakh new taxpayers added in FY26 through AIS-based detection.
- New Tax Regime: The new income tax regime (lower rates, no deductions) introduced in Budget 2020 and further simplified in 2023 — now 75%+ of individual taxpayers use it. This has reduced litigation but also reduced government's ability to direct investment through deduction incentives.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- Tax-to-GDP ratio: India at 11.5% is among the lowest for a G20 economy; improving the ratio to 15% (similar to Thailand and Malaysia) would add Rs 3–4 lakh crore annually in revenue — funding significant additional public investment.
- Direct vs. Indirect Tax Balance: Direct taxes (income, corporate) are more progressive (higher earners pay more); indirect taxes (GST, customs) are regressive (everyone pays the same rate regardless of income). India's ratio is skewed toward indirect taxes — raising direct taxes or broadening the direct taxpayer base is a long-term structural goal.
- Faceless Assessment: AI-powered, random allocation of tax cases to assessment officers across India — eliminates taxpayer-officer nexus; has significantly reduced corruption and improved compliance; a UPSC case study in e-governance.

- ✦ **Direct Taxes** — Taxes levied directly on income or wealth — Income Tax (personal + corporate), STT (Securities Transaction Tax), Dividend Distribution Tax; administered by CBDT (Central Board of Direct Taxes) under CBIC framework.
- ✦ **Tax-to-GDP Ratio** — Total tax revenue as a % of GDP; India's ~11.5% is low compared to OECD average (~33%); reflects large informal economy and agricultural income exemptions.
- ✦ **AIS (Annual Information Statement)** — A comprehensive pre-filled tax document available to all taxpayers showing all financial transactions (income, property, investments, foreign travel, high-value purchases) from multiple data sources; improved tax compliance significantly since 2021.

10. PM Releases Rs 18,880 Crore for Farmers Under PM-KISAN

[TH] Page 16

GS 3: Indian Economy: Agriculture; Direct Benefit Transfer; Farmer Welfare; PM-KISAN; Minimum Support Price.

- June 19, 2026: PM Modi released the 20th Instalment of PM-KISAN (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi) — Rs 2,000 per farmer, totalling Rs 18,880 crore to ~9.44 crore farmers across India.
- PM-KISAN has now transferred Rs 3.46 lakh crore cumulatively since its launch in February 2019.
- Context: The 20th instalment comes at a critical time — monsoon deficit 35%, fertiliser prices elevated, Kharif sowing season opening; the Rs 2,000 helps farmers manage input costs.
- DBT success: 100% of PM-KISAN transfers are through Aadhaar-linked bank accounts; zero leakage claimed by government.

- PM-KISAN (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi): Direct income support of Rs 6,000/year in three equal instalments of Rs 2,000 each (February, June, October) to all landholding farmer families; ~9.4 crore beneficiaries; fully centrally funded; launched February 2019.
- Eligibility: All farmer families with cultivable land; excludes: institutional landowners; former/serving constitutional post-holders; taxpaying families; retired government employees.
- Rural economic impact: Rs 6,000/year may seem modest but for marginal farmers (~71% of India's farmers have land holding below 1 hectare) it represents meaningful income support — covering fertiliser costs for 1–2 seasons.
- Demand for increase: Multiple farmer organisations have demanded increase to Rs 12,000/year; Telangana's Rythu Bandhu (Rs 10,000/acre/season) is cited as a model; fiscal cost of doubling PM-KISAN would be ~Rs 37,000 crore/year additional — politically attractive but fiscally significant.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- PM-KISAN data is a UPSC favourite — know: Rs 6,000/year in 3 instalments; 9.4 crore beneficiaries; Rs 3.46 lakh crore cumulative; started 2019; Aadhaar-linked DBT.

• Land Holdings and Marginal Farmers: Agricultural Census 2021 shows 71% of farmers hold under 1 hectare; 86% hold under 2 hectares — 'marginal' and 'small' farmers; PM-KISAN's flat per-family transfer is regressive (gives same amount to 1-hectare and 10-hectare farmers) — reform proposals include linking the amount to landholding size.

- ✦ **PM-KISAN** — Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi — direct income support of Rs 6,000/year to ~9.4 crore landholding farmer families; launched 2019; fully centrally funded; Aadhaar-linked DBT.
- ✦ **DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer)** — Government scheme transferring subsidies and welfare payments directly to beneficiaries' Aadhaar-linked bank accounts; eliminates intermediary leakages; total DBT transferred: Rs 38+ lakh crore since 2013.

11. Real Barriers to Trade Are No Longer Tariffs — It's Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs)

[TH] Page 10

GS 2 / GS 3: IR / Economy: Trade Policy; WTO; Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs); India's Trade Policy; Free Trade Agreements; India-UK CETA.

- ▶ As India-UK CETA enters force (July 15) and India-EU FTA finalises, the article argues that tariff reduction is no longer the critical factor in international trade — NTBs (Non-Tariff Barriers) are.
- ▶ Example: India reduces UK tariffs to zero on cars; yet UK cars won't flood India because India's safety standards, emission norms (BS VI), homologation requirements, and right-hand-drive specifications already filter imports.
- ▶ For India's exports: UK zero tariffs on textiles are welcome, but UK's SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary) measures for food, EU's CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism) for industrial goods, and FDA-equivalent standards for pharma are the real barriers.
- ▶ India's own NTBs: Mandatory BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) certification, quality control orders (QCOs), and anti-dumping duties are India's own NTBs against cheaper imports — particularly Chinese goods.

Categories of Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs)

- **Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT):** Standards, regulations, and testing/certification requirements that products must meet; India's QCOs require BIS certification for 150+ product categories; EU's CE marking; USA's FCC approval for electronics.
- **Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures:** Food safety and plant health regulations; EU's stringent pesticide residue limits have blocked Indian mango exports (diverting to Gulf, Southeast Asia); UK's SPS standards are high post-Brexit.
- **Rules of Origin (RoO):** FTAs specify what percentage of a product's value must originate in the FTA partner country for preferential duty to apply; India's CETA RoO requires 40%+ local content in cars — prevents China+India 'tariff hopping.'
- **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM):** EU's CBAM charges a 'carbon price' on imports of steel, cement, aluminium, fertiliser, hydrogen, and electricity; Indian steel and aluminium exports face CBAM charges from 2026; this is an NTB with environmental justification.
- India's response: India is developing its own Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS) partly to prepare for CBAM compliance; India has also filed a WTO dispute against CBAM as an unfair trade restriction.

★ UPSC ANGLE

• WTO and NTBs: WTO agreements (TBT Agreement, SPS Agreement) allow NTBs if: based on international standards (ISO, Codex Alimentarius, OIE); not discriminatory; not disguised protectionism. India's BIS-based QCOs have been challenged at WTO by China as disguised protectionism.

• FTA economic impact: Post-CETA, economists estimate net trade boost of £2–3 billion initially (modest) — mostly because UK-India trade barriers were already low in goods; services liberalisation (professional mobility, IT market access) is the bigger economic opportunity.

- ✦ **NTBs (Non-Tariff Barriers)** — All trade barriers other than tariffs — includes standards (TBT), food safety rules (SPS), quotas, licences, rules of origin, border procedures, and carbon border adjustments.

- **QCO (Quality Control Order)** — India's mechanism for mandating BIS (Bureau of Indian Standards) certification for domestic and imported goods; India has issued QCOs for 150+ products; effectively restricts imports from non-BIS-certified manufacturers.
- **CBAM (Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism)** — EU's carbon tariff on imports from countries without equivalent carbon pricing; applies from 2026 to steel, aluminium, cement, fertilisers, electricity; India has filed WTO dispute; India's CCTS is partly a CBAM-preparation measure.

12. India Producing More Graduates Than the Economy Can Absorb?

[TH] Page 11

GS 2 / GS 3: Governance: Education; Employment; Higher Education; Skill Development; Youth Unemployment; AISHE data.

- ▶ India produces ~9 million graduates annually (AISHE 2024-25 data); only ~40–45% find employment in their degree field within 2 years of graduation.
- ▶ Structural mismatch: India's higher education system produces large numbers of arts, commerce, and humanities graduates; industry demand is concentrated in STEM (technology, engineering), healthcare, and skilled trades — creating a skills-education mismatch.
- ▶ Youth unemployment: 15–29 age group unemployment at 15.2% (PLFS Jan-Mar 2026) — 3x the national average; 'educated unemployment' is concentrated in this group.
- ▶ The qualifications trap: A degree certificate often does not signal competency; employers (especially MSMEs and manufacturing) struggle to trust graduate quality.

- AISHE (All India Survey on Higher Education) 2024-25: Total enrolment 43.3 million; Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in HE: 28.4% (up from 24.5% in 2019-20); women's GER has exceeded men's in urban areas.
- Quality concern: AICTE (All India Council for Technical Education) data shows 65% of engineering graduates in India are considered 'unemployable' by industry standards — without additional skilling; the degree does not signal readiness.
- Germany-India comparison: Germany has ~35% of students in vocational education (Berufsschule) vs. India's ~5% in ITIs; Germany's Mittelstand (medium-sized enterprises) benefit from a vocationally trained workforce; India's vocational system is stigmatised.
- PM Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY): Government's flagship skill development scheme; 1.4 crore youth trained; but 'certification' often does not translate to employment; placement rates are the critical unverified metric.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio): % of the age group 18-23 enrolled in higher education; India at 28.4% is below China (60%) and South Korea (95%) but above its 2015 level (24%); NEP 2020 target: 50% GER by 2035.
- Demographic dividend window: India's working-age population peaks around 2041; realising the demographic dividend requires rapidly improving employment-education alignment. The 'graduate unemployment' problem is a potential demographic liability rather than dividend.
- Aspirational middle class vs. employment reality: Millions of first-generation college-educated youth cannot find appropriate employment — this is a political and social tension that drives electoral behaviour, particularly in Bihar, UP, Rajasthan.

- **AISHE** — All India Survey on Higher Education — annual survey by MoE capturing enrolment, institutions, faculty, and GER data; 2024-25 shows 43.3 million enrolments.
- **Employability** — The possession of skills, knowledge, and attributes that make a graduate attractive to employers; India's 'employability gap' — gap between degree and job-readiness — is estimated at 65% in engineering.
- **GER (Gross Enrolment Ratio)** — % of the official age group (18-23) enrolled in higher education; India at 28.4%; NEP 2020 target: 50% by 2035.

13. India's Pharmaceutical Regulatory Oversight Needs to Improve

[TH] Page 10

GS 3: Economy: Pharmaceutical sector; regulatory frameworks; Drugs and Cosmetics Act; CDSCO; India as 'pharmacy of the world'.

- ▶ India exports ~20% of global generic medicines by volume; is the world's largest vaccine producer; provides ~\$27 billion in pharmaceutical exports annually.
- ▶ Regulatory challenge: Multiple export batches from Indian pharma companies have been recalled or rejected in the US (FDA import alerts), UK (MHRA warnings), and WHO pre-qualified list removals for quality deficiencies.
- ▶ Most recent: In 2024–25, 12 Indian pharma companies received FDA Form 483 (quality observations) during inspections; 3 received import alerts (effective ban on US exports).
- ▶ Root cause: The Drugs and Cosmetics Act (1940, amended) and CDSCO are inadequate for monitoring the modern pharmaceutical manufacturing ecosystem — the Act predates current GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) standards.

- Key regulatory gaps: (1) Dual regulation — CDSCO at the centre and State Drug Control Authorities (SDCAs) at the state level create overlap and inconsistency; manufacturing licences are state-issued but quality standards are central; this allows regulatory arbitrage. (2) Inadequate inspector-to-facility ratio: India has ~7,000 licensed pharmaceutical manufacturers but ~500 SDCA drug inspectors nationally — each inspector responsible for 14+ units. (3) Corruption allegations: Multiple media investigations (The Wire, The Indian Express) have documented industry-inspector nexus in state drug regulation.
- India's response: A new Drugs, Medical Devices and Cosmetics Bill (DMDC Bill) has been in draft since 2019 — has not been passed; it would: separate regulation of drugs and medical devices; create a modern GMP framework; strengthen CDSCO's powers; create an independent India Drugs Regulatory Authority (IDRA) on CDSCO.
- WHO pre-qualification: WHO pre-qualification of medicines is essential for Indian generics to supply UN procurement (UNICEF, GFATM for HIV, TB, malaria drugs); lapses in quality result in removal from the WHO pre-qualified list — a major commercial and reputational loss.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- India's 'Pharmacy of the World' at risk: The 2022 cough syrup contamination deaths in Gambia and Cameroon (MAIDEN Pharmaceuticals, Haryana); the 2023 eye drop contamination deaths in the US — these incidents have damaged India's pharmaceutical quality reputation; regulatory strengthening is a national interest issue.
- DMDC Bill (Drugs, Medical Devices and Cosmetics Bill): Currently in draft; key proposals — IDRA (independent regulator); unified central licencing for manufacturers; enhanced penalties; faster approvals for innovative drugs; risk-based inspection frequency.

- **CDSCO (Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation)** — India's apex drug and medical device regulator; approves new drugs, conducts post-market surveillance, coordinates with state authorities; headquartered in New Delhi; under MoHFW.
- **FDA Form 483** — US FDA's 'inspectional observations' document issued to a manufacturing facility after an inspection; lists observed deviations from GMP; multiple 483s or unresolved observations lead to Warning Letters and Import Alerts.
- **GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice)** — Internationally recognised standards for pharmaceutical production quality control; WHO GMP guidelines are the baseline; US FDA and EU EMA have more stringent GMP standards that Indian exporters must meet.

14. SC Homemakers Verdict Has 'Class Blinkers' — A Critique

[IE] Page 13

GS 2: Governance: Judicial decisions; Social Justice; Gender and Class Intersection; Motor Accident Compensation.

- ▶ Indian Express columnist argues that the SC's Rs 30,000 notional income floor for homemakers is 'welcome but class-limited' — the Rs 30,000 floor still reflects a middle-class understanding of homemaking.
- ▶ For the majority of rural homemakers, who perform much more physically demanding work (carrying water, agricultural labour, fuel collection alongside child-rearing), Rs 30,000 may even undervalue their contribution.
- ▶ The court linked the notional income to market comparables of domestic services — but in many states, domestic workers earn Rs 5,000–8,000/month. The Rs 30,000 floor actually uses an urban-biased benchmark.
- ▶ The article argues the judgment should also have addressed: caste dimension (lower-caste homemakers face additional barriers to compensation); rural vs. urban disparity in MACT awards.

- The intersectionality gap: A Dalit woman in rural Bihar performing agricultural labour + homemaking receives compensation calculated based on urban market rates — there's an embedded class and caste assumption in MACT awards that the SC has not addressed.
- Comparison needed: The SC should have also directed state governments to revise MACTs' actual practice — because while the SC sets precedent, MACT judges often apply outdated rates until a specific higher court correction in each state.

★ UPSC ANGLE

- UPSC angle: The SC homemakers judgment is a landmark but should be critically analysed — the Rs 30,000 floor is better than minimum wage comparisons but still based on middle-class domestic service rates; intersectional analysis (class, caste, rural-urban) is important for GS answers.
- Article 14 (Equality): MACT compensation differential between homemakers based on education, social status, or economic background may itself violate the right to equality — a constitutional challenge not yet fully addressed.

15. Kerala's Nipah Risk Profile: Why It's a Hotspot

[TH] Page 12

GS 2: Health: Nipah virus; One Health; pandemic preparedness; zoonotic disease surveillance; Kerala healthcare model.

- ▶ Kerala has had 5 of the 7 Nipah outbreaks detected in India (2018, 2019, 2021, 2023, 2026 — all in or near Kozhikode).
- ▶ The article analyses why Kerala is disproportionately affected: (a) High *Pteropus medius* bat population in Kerala's Western Ghats; (b) human-bat interface through fruit orchards and bat-roosting buildings in Kozhikode; (c) Kerala's dense population and high mobility facilitate rapid spread if detected late.
- ▶ Paradox: Kerala's strong health system is both why outbreaks are detected and why they are contained — low NiV IgM seroprevalence suggests Kerala's outbreaks are true epidemic events, not missed endemic transmission.
- ▶ Global context: Nipah's geographic range includes Bangladesh (almost annual outbreaks), parts of Southeast Asia; climate change may expand the *Pteropus* bat range.

- Why containment works in Kerala: Dense ASHA and health volunteer network; pre-existing Nipah SOP; IDSP integration; rapid PCR testing capacity (NIMHANS-approved protocol at MCH Kozhikode); community trust built through previous outbreak management.
- Risk factors that remain: Encephalitis cases from unknown causes are still under-investigated in some districts; bat population management is ethically and ecologically complex (bats provide pollination services); no approved Nipah vaccine (experimental Henipah mRNA vaccine in Phase 1 trials by mRNA vaccines consortium).

★ UPSC ANGLE

- UPSC-tested: 5 Nipah outbreaks all traced to fruit bats; CFR 40-75%; no approved treatment; Kerala's model is One Health (human + animal + environment); NIV Pune is WHO Collaborating Centre; Chapter VI of India's Epidemic Diseases Act governs outbreak response.

16. Govt May Roll Back Emergency Fuel Measures as Tensions Ease

[IE] Page 17

GS 3: Economy: Petroleum pricing; OMCs; fiscal management; fuel subsidy.

- ▶ June 18 news: Government announced a Rs 5/litre rollback of petrol and diesel prices — partially reversing the Rs 7.5/litre emergency hike cycle of May 2026, as Brent crude falls post-Muscat Accord.
- ▶ Government may also: (a) lift the diesel export curb imposed in April 2026 (when OMCs were restricting bulk diesel to prevent shortage); (b) remove the Rs 55.50/litre export duty on diesel; (c) relax ATF (aviation turbine fuel) pricing controls.
- ▶ Fiscal logic: If Brent crude stays below \$95/barrel, OMC under-recoveries disappear and the government can reduce the subsidy top-up; Rs 30,000–40,000 crore in fiscal savings if Hormuz stays open through Kharif season.
- ▶ Rupee impact: INR strengthened to Rs 91.5 from Rs 97 — each Rs 1 rupee appreciation reduces import bill by Rs 7,000–8,000 crore annually.

- OMC financial position: Post Rs 5/litre rollback, petrol is at ~Rs 97/litre in Delhi; at Brent \$90, OMC marketing margins are approximately Rs 3–4/litre — small but positive; OMCs no longer making losses, so government subsidy top-up reduced.
- Kharif season logistics relief: Lower diesel prices help farmers, transporters, and cold chain operators during Kharif harvest procurement (October–December) — planning ahead, the government is timing the rollback to help agricultural logistics.

17. Beyond 'Depression and Anxiety': How Young Adivasis Describe Distress

[TH] Page 24

GS 2: Health: Mental Health; Tribal Issues; Cultural Sensitivity in Healthcare; Adivasi Youth.

- ▶ Jharkhand-based study (NIMHANS-Ranchi collaboration) finds that Adivasi youth describe mental distress in culturally specific terms that don't map onto DSM-5 categories of 'depression' or 'anxiety.'
- ▶ Indigenous terms used: 'Nirasha' (hopelessness), 'Ghar ki chinta' (family worry), 'Jungle ke liye tarsna' (yearning for the forest — linked to displacement), 'Bhoot ke dar' (spirit-related fear).
- ▶ Policy implication: Mental health services in tribal areas designed around clinical DSM categories miss the majority of distress presentations — a 'category fallacy' where Western diagnostic frameworks are imposed on non-Western populations.
- ▶ NEP 2020 and NIMHANS's National Mental Health Programme are beginning to incorporate cultural context — but implementation in remote tribal areas is minimal.

- Cultural context is diagnostic: 'Jungle ke liye tarsna' — the yearning for forest — reflects the collective trauma of forest disenfranchisement and displacement; it's not simply 'depression' but a grief response to the loss of subsistence environment that has no equivalent DSM category. Treating it with SSRIs without addressing the underlying land displacement is both ineffective and culturally inappropriate.

★ UPSC ANGLE

• Mental Health and Tribal Issues: A novel UPSC topic intersection — mental healthcare access in tribal areas; cultural sensitivity in healthcare; intersection of Article 21 (right to health) with tribal rights (PESA, FRA, UNDRIP). Forest Rights Act implementation failures are literally causing mental health crises among displaced Adivasis.

- 📖 **DSM-5 (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, 5th Edition)** — American Psychiatric Association's standard classification of mental health disorders; widely used globally; criticised for cultural bias — diagnostic categories developed in Western clinical contexts may not translate to other cultures.

18. Children with Vitiligo Deserve Freedom from Stigma and Misinformation

[TH] Page 24

GS 2: Health: Dermatological conditions; Social Stigma; Children's Rights; Health Education; Psychological Well-being.

- ▶ World Vitiligo Day (June 25) context: The Hindu publishes awareness piece on vitiligo in children — a condition that carries enormous social stigma in India despite being non-contagious and not life-threatening.
- ▶ Vitiligo: A chronic autoimmune condition causing loss of skin pigmentation in patches (depigmented white patches); affects 0.5–2% of the global population (~1 crore Indians).
- ▶ In India: Vitiligo in children is often (incorrectly) associated with past sins, dietary violations (fish+milk together), supernatural causes — leading to social exclusion, school bullying, reduced marriage prospects.
- ▶ Medical reality: Vitiligo is an autoimmune condition (immune system destroys melanocytes); it is treatable (narrowband UVB phototherapy, tacrolimus, topical corticosteroids) but not always curable; it is NOT contagious, not leprosy, not related to diet.

- India's stigma context: Skin conditions and skin colour are deeply socially significant in India; vitiligo's white patches are often conflated with leprosy (which carries far more stigma) or with caste and 'purity' narratives — children bear the brunt in schools.
- Legal protection: PWD Act (2016) does not include vitiligo in its list of disabilities; the article argues severe vitiligo (affecting large body surface area) causes functional impairment (photosensitivity, uveitis risk) and should be included.

19. PM Modi Holds Discussions with French Firms on India Investments at VivaTech

[TH] Page 15

GS 2: IR: India-France bilateral relations; India as investment destination; Bharat Innovates; GS3: Economy.

- ▶ PM Modi attended VivaTech 2026 (Paris Expo, June 17-19) — addressed as India's AI Country Partner; held targeted sessions with French industrial and tech firms.
- ▶ Key firm interactions: TotalEnergies (green hydrogen and solar), Airbus (Make in India aerospace — C295, additional helicopter orders), LVMH and luxury goods companies (India's luxury market growing 25% annually), Thales (defence electronics, safety systems), BioMérieux (health diagnostics).
- ▶ India's pitch: India as a manufacturing + innovation hub — 'Make in India' + 'Design in India'; Modi highlighted Dholera semiconductor park, green hydrogen corridor, and AI data centres as flagship investment opportunities.
- ▶ Bilateral investment: French FDI into India (Rs 33,000 crore cumulative to 2025); India-France bilateral trade: €13.8 billion (2025).

- Airbus C295 and IAF: Airbus is establishing a C295 transport aircraft assembly line in Vadodara (Tata Advanced Systems + Airbus JV) — the first Airbus aircraft assembled in India; Modi at VivaTech discussed scaling this to produce 40 aircraft for the IAF and potential exports.
- TotalEnergies-India: French major TotalEnergies has \$13+ billion invested in India (Adani Green Energy partnership, ONGC joint ventures, LNG terminals); PM Modi discussed expansion in India's green hydrogen mission.

PRELIMS IN FOCUS

Exercise Khaan Quest 2026	Multinational joint military exercise; hosted by Mongolia; Five Hills Training Area, Ulaanbaatar; June 20 – July 3, 2026. 23rd edition. Origin: 2003 (bilateral USA–Mongolia); expanded to multilateral peacekeeping exercise in 2006. Focus: UN peacekeeping under Chapter VII of UN Charter. India: 40 personnel, Jat Regiment. India's Jat Regiment: One of India's oldest infantry regiments (1795); famous for courage and discipline; based in Bareilly, UP. India is the world's largest contributor of UN peacekeeping troops (180,000+ since 1950; ~7,000 currently deployed).
PM-KISAN — 20th Instalment Released	Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi: Rs 6,000/year in three Rs 2,000 instalments; ~9.44 crore beneficiaries; launched February 2019; 100% centrally funded; Aadhaar-linked DBT. 20th instalment released June 19, 2026: Rs 18,880 crore. Cumulative release: Rs 3.46 lakh crore. Excludes: institutional landowners, former constitutional post-holders, Income Tax payers, retired government employees. Ministry: Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare.
India's Tax-to-GDP Ratio	FY2025-26: ~11.5%; Direct taxes: Rs 5.21 lakh crore (15.1% YoY growth); Indirect taxes: ~Rs 11.23 lakh crore; Total tax receipts: ~Rs 16.44 lakh crore. Personal income tax (PIT): Rs 3.52 lakh crore (largest component). India's tax-to-GDP is among the lowest in G20; OECD average ~33%; improvement driven by: Faceless Assessment; AIS pre-filled returns; widening formal economy. 8.9 crore ITRs filed (AY2025-26) — highest ever.
Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi — Article 49 / Article 51A(f)	Constitutional basis: Article 49 (DPSP) — State to protect monuments, places, and objects of historical and artistic importance; Article 51A(f) (Fundamental Duty) — to value and preserve rich heritage of composite culture. UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India: 42 (as of 2024). Notable projects under 'Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi': Kashi Vishwanath Corridor; Ram Mandir, Ayodhya; Mahakal Lok, Ujjain; Ekta Nagar, Vadodara; Kedarnath reconstruction; Somnath Temple redevelopment.
BRICS Membership (2026)	11 members: Original 5 (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) + New members (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Indonesia — joined 2024). India holds rotating BRICS Chair in 2026 (theme: 'Responsive BRICS for a Secure Future'). BRICS NSA meeting: New Delhi, June 22-23. BRICS GDP (PPP): ~36% of global; Population: ~46%. BRICS Bank: New Development Bank (NDB) — headquartered in Shanghai; funds infrastructure in member states; India's nominee as its president: K.V. Kamath (first president).

MAPPING — PLACES IN NEWS

Place	Why in News / Location / Key Facts
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia	Host city of Khaan Quest 2026 (Five Hills Training Area); capital of Mongolia; landlocked between Russia and China; Mongolia's 'Third Neighbour Policy' seeks relationships with democratic countries (USA, India, Japan) to reduce dependence on Russia and China; India and Mongolia signed a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2015.
Rajbari, Bangladesh	Site of the proposed Padma Barrage on the Padma River (= Ganga entering Bangladesh); Pangsha, Rajbari district; ~180 km downstream of Farakka Barrage; 1996 Ganges Water Sharing Treaty expires December 2026.
Fordow, Qom, Iran	Iran's underground uranium enrichment facility; built inside a mountain (hardened against airstrikes); IAEA inspectors resumed access under the Muscat Accord (June 2026); 60-day nuclear negotiations focus on Fordow's advanced centrifuge banks.
Kozhikode (Calicut), Kerala	5th Nipah outbreak (June 2026); contained to 4 cases; historic Malabar port city; first European contact point (Vasco da Gama, 1498); named UNESCO Creative City of Literature (2022).
Nice, France	Modi-Macron bilateral talks (June 14); Bharat Innovates 2026 showcased Indian deep-tech startups; French Riviera, Alpes-Maritimes département; India-UK CETA announcement made here.

Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh	Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi — Kashi Vishwanath Corridor (inaugurated December 2021) as flagship heritage-development project; PM Modi's Lok Sabha constituency; on the Ganga; one of the world's oldest inhabited cities (~3,000 years).
Ayodhya, Uttar Pradesh	Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi — Ram Mandir complex (consecrated January 2024); Maryada Purushottam Shri Ram Airport (new, inaugurated 2024); on the Sarayu River; declared a 'Smart City'; Rs 30,000 crore infrastructure development ongoing.
Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh	Vikas Bhi Virasat Bhi — Mahakal Lok expansion (inaugurated by PM Modi in October 2022); one of India's 12 Jyotirlinga sites; on the Kshipra River; hosts Simhastha Kumbh Mela (next in 2028); historically India's prime meridian (Greenwich Meridian of ancient India).