UPSC with SAURABH KAUSHIK

Current Affairs Notes · 30 June 2026

The Hindu · Indian Express · PIB | 16 Topics | GS 2 · 3 + Prelims + Mapping

[TH] The Hindu | [IE] Indian Express | [PIB] Press Info Bureau | [Other] Misc.

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PIB HIGHLIGHTS — 30 JUNE 2026 (Curated for UPSC)

1. Project BRAHMANK of BRO Marks Its 16th Raising Day

✓ Border Roads Organisation (BRO) celebrated the 16th Raising Day of Project BRAHMANK — one of BRO's specialised road construction projects.

✓ BRO project naming convention: Each BRO project is responsible for road construction/maintenance in a specific border region and has a unique codename; Project BRAHMANK is responsible for road infrastructure in a designated sector (typically associated with northeastern or high-altitude border areas).

✓ BRO overview: Established May 7, 1960; under Ministry of Defence; constructs and maintains roads, bridges, tunnels, and airfields in India's border areas (Himalayan border with China, western border with

Pakistan, northeastern frontier); operates through specialised projects like Project BRAHMANK, Project Vartak, Project Swastik, Project Beacon, Project Dantak (Bhutan), Project Setuk, Project Himank (Ladakh), Project Arunank (Arunachal Pradesh).

✓ Strategic significance: Border roads are critical 'force multipliers' for rapid troop deployment, especially relevant given the new Integrated Battle Group (IBG) doctrine requiring 48-hour deployment — IBGs cannot function without all-weather road connectivity to forward areas.

✓ Recent achievements: BRO has constructed/upgraded several strategic roads and tunnels including the Atal Tunnel (Rohtang), Sela Tunnel (Arunachal Pradesh), and is currently working on the Zoji La Tunnel and Shinku La Tunnel for all-weather Ladakh connectivity.

✓ GS3 Angle: Border infrastructure; BRO; strategic roads; Himalayan connectivity; military logistics; China border infrastructure parity.

2. SUMAN Roadmap 2030 — Maternal and Newborn Health

✓ Ministry of Health and Family Welfare released the 'SUMAN Roadmap 2030' — an extended action plan building on the existing Surakshit Matritva Aashwasan (SUMAN) scheme.

✓ SUMAN (launched 2019): Guarantees zero-expense, dignified, and assured quality healthcare for every woman and newborn visiting public health facilities; provides free delivery (including caesarean section), free transport, free diagnostics, free drugs and consumables, free diet during stay, and free blood if needed.

✓ Roadmap 2030 enhancements: (1) Universal coverage of high-risk pregnancy identification and management; (2) Integration with Anaemia Mukt Bharat protocols (early action norms, June 27); (3) Expansion of midwifery-led care units (MLCUs) for normal deliveries; (4) Strengthening First Referral Units (FRUs) for emergency obstetric care; (5) Target: reduce Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) to below 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030 (from current ~97, as per SRS 2020-22) — aligning with SDG 3.1 target of <70 by 2030.

✓ India's MMR trajectory: 130 (2014-16) → 113 (2016-18) → 97 (2018-20) → ~93 (2020-22, SRS); significant decline but regional disparities persist (Assam, MP, UP have higher MMR than Kerala, Tamil Nadu).

✓ GS2 Angle: Maternal health; SUMAN; MMR; SDG 3; midwifery; First Referral Units; National Health Mission.

3. The Kisan Sarathi Platform — AI-Driven Agricultural Advisory

✓ Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare highlighted the Kisan Sarathi platform — an AI/ICT-driven advisory platform connecting farmers directly with agricultural scientists and extension experts.

✓ What it does: Farmers can get personalised, localised farming advice via voice calls, SMS, and app interface in their regional language; covers: crop selection, pest/disease management, weather-based advisories, soil health-based fertiliser recommendations, market price information, government scheme information.

✓ Integration: Built on top of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) network of Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) — 731 KVKs across India serve as the backend expert network; Kisan Sarathi acts as the digital front-end connecting farmers to this expertise.

✓ Scale: Over 4 crore farmers registered; available in regional languages; integrates with Digital Agriculture Mission and the broader Kisan e-Mitra AI chatbot ecosystem.

✓ AI capabilities: Recent upgrades include generative AI-based crop diagnosis from photos (upload a photo of a diseased crop, AI identifies likely pest/disease and recommends treatment); voice-based AI in 12+ regional languages for low-literacy farmers.

✓ GS3 Angle: Digital agriculture; AI in agriculture; ICAR; KVKs; agricultural extension services; Digital Agriculture Mission; farmer welfare technology.

GS PAPER 2 — International Relations · Internal Security

1. Dozens Killed as Pakistan Targets Afghan Militants — Border Crisis Deepens

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GS 2: International Relations: Pakistan-Afghanistan relations; TTP; Durand Line; cross-border terrorism; regional security architecture.

- June 28-29, 2026: Pakistani security forces conducted a ground operation and 'calibrated strikes' along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, claiming to have killed 29 militants belonging to Jamaat-ul-Ahrar and 'Fitna al-Khawarij' (Pakistan's term for TTP) in Paktia, Paktika, and Kunar provinces of Afghanistan.
- Afghan officials dispute this: claiming at least 36 civilians killed and 160+ wounded; eyewitnesses in Chamkani district (Paktia) allege residential areas were hit, including a 'double-tap' strike on a rescue crowd that gathered after the first strike.
- Trigger: A day earlier (June 27), militants attacked the Pakistan Rangers' regional headquarters in Karachi, killing 3 soldiers; Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (a TTP breakaway faction) claimed responsibility; one captured attacker was identified as an Afghan national.
- Afghanistan's response: Condemned the strikes as a 'cowardly act of aggression'; Taliban government spokesperson said Afghanistan would respond 'in due time' — raising fears of renewed escalation.

Background: The Pakistan-Afghanistan Conflict Since February 2026

- Since February 2026, Pakistan and Afghanistan have been in a state of intermittent open conflict — Pakistan accuses the Afghan Taliban government of harbouring TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan) militants who launch attacks inside Pakistan; Afghanistan denies this and condemns Pakistani strikes as violations of its sovereignty.
- TTP vs. Afghan Taliban: Two distinct organisations — Afghan Taliban (ruling Afghanistan since 2021 withdrawal of US forces) and TTP (Pakistani Taliban, fighting against the Pakistani state); they share ideological roots and some operational ties, but the Afghan Taliban government officially denies sponsoring TTP attacks on Pakistan.
- China's mediation attempt: China hosted Pakistan-Afghanistan talks in April 2026; Beijing announced both sides had agreed to 'not escalate' and 'explore a solution' — but this agreement has not held; China's interest stems from CPEC security concerns (Pakistan's western border instability threatens Chinese investments) and from not wanting instability near its Xinjiang-adjacent interests.
- Pattern of escalation: Since February 2026: 'open war' declared by Pakistan → internationally mediated peace talks → ~1 month of relative calm → Pakistani airstrikes (≈3 weeks ago) → Karachi Rangers attack (June 27) → Pakistani ground operation + strikes (June 28-29) — a repeating cycle that has killed hundreds since February.

India's Strategic Interest

- India has historically supported Afghan governments (pre-Taliban) and has cautiously engaged with the Taliban government since 2021 (opened a technical mission in Kabul, 2022); India's interest: preventing Pakistan from using the TTP conflict to redirect anti-India terrorist resources; preventing further radicalisation in the AfPak region that could spill into Kashmir; monitoring whether China's mediation role expands China's strategic depth in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- Durand Line dispute: The 2,640 km Pakistan-Afghanistan border (Durand Line, drawn 1893 by British India) has never been formally recognised by any Afghan government (including the Taliban) — both Pashtun-majority regions straddle this line; this unresolved boundary dispute is the geographic foundation of the ongoing conflict, since militants can move across an unrecognised, porous border.

UPSC ANGLE

• UPSC relevance: The Durand Line is a classic 'arbitrary colonial boundary' case study (compare with the Radcliffe Line, Sykes-Picot Line); demonstrates how colonial-era boundaries continue to generate 21st-century conflicts.

• India's calibrated approach: India neither endorses Pakistan's strikes nor extends overt support to the Afghan Taliban; India's posture remains: counter-terrorism cooperation where possible, humanitarian engagement with

Afghanistan, and strategic patience regarding the TTP-Pakistan conflict (which weakens a rival without direct Indian involvement).

- **TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan)** — Pakistani Taliban; distinct from Afghan Taliban; fights against the Pakistani state; blamed for most attacks on Pakistani security forces; allegedly operates from safe havens in Afghan border provinces (Paktia, Paktika, Kunar).
- **Durand Line** — 2,640 km Pakistan-Afghanistan border drawn by British India in 1893 (Sir Mortimer Durand); never recognised by any Afghan government; splits Pashtun tribal areas; the porous, unrecognised border enables militant cross-border movement.

2. West Bengal Govt Will Table Uniform Civil Code Bill Soon — Implications

[TH] Page 1

GS 2: Polity: Uniform Civil Code; Article 44 (DPSP); Personal Laws; State Legislative Competence; Concurrent List.

‣ West Bengal Chief Minister announced the state government will soon table a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill in the state assembly — a notable development given West Bengal's ruling party (TMC) has historically opposed UCC when proposed by the BJP-led Centre or Uttarakhand.

‣ Context: This follows Uttarakhand's UCC Act (2024) — India's first state-level UCC, covering marriage, divorce, inheritance, and live-in relationship registration for all residents regardless of religion (with exemptions for Scheduled Tribes).

‣ West Bengal's likely approach: Reports suggest West Bengal's version may differ significantly from Uttarakhand's — potentially focusing on specific reforms (e.g., uniform age of marriage, inheritance rights for women) while avoiding the more contentious live-in relationship registration requirements that drew criticism in Uttarakhand.

‣ Political significance: A TMC-led UCC initiative would be unprecedented — the party has consistently positioned itself as opposing 'saffron politics' and protecting Muslim minority interests; a state-specific UCC could be: (a) genuine reform, or (b) a political manoeuvre ahead of the 2026 West Bengal Assembly elections to neutralise the BJP's UCC plank.

Constitutional and Legal Framework

- Article 44 (DPSP): 'The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India.' This is a Directive Principle — not justiciable, not mandatory, but a guiding goal for the state.
- Legislative competence: Marriage, divorce, succession, and family law fall under the Concurrent List (List III) — Entry 5 covers 'Marriage and divorce; infants and minors; adoption; wills, intestacy and succession.' Both Parliament and State Legislatures can legislate; in case of conflict, central law prevails unless the state law receives Presidential assent under Article 254(2).
- Uttarakhand precedent: Uttarakhand's UCC received Presidential assent and came into force February 2024; it has survived initial legal challenges; West Bengal's bill would need similar Presidential assent if it conflicts with central personal laws.
- The Sarla Mudgal and Shah Bano legacy: SC's Sarla Mudgal case (1995) and the Shah Bano case (1985, leading to the Muslim Women Act 1986) are the classic UCC jurisprudence references — both highlighted the tension between religious personal laws and gender justice, with the Court repeatedly urging Parliament to enact a UCC under Article 44.

Political Asymmetry: UCC as a Multi-Party Issue

- Historically, UCC has been a BJP/RSS plank (seen as part of the Hindutva agenda by critics, while BJP frames it as 'gender justice' and 'national integration'); if West Bengal's TMC government tables its own UCC, it would mark UCC's transition from a single-party issue to a genuinely pan-party governance reform — though the political motivations (electoral competition before 2026 polls) will be scrutinised.
- Other states' UCC moves: Gujarat, Assam, Madhya Pradesh (BJP-governed) have announced intentions to form UCC committees; if West Bengal moves forward, it would be the 2nd state (after Uttarakhand) to actually legislate, and the first non-BJP state to do so.

UPSC ANGLE

• 22nd Law Commission's UCC consultation (2023): Received 8.5 million+ responses — the most ever for a Law Commission consultation; reflects the issue's political salience; the Commission's final report on UCC is still pending.

• Goa's existing Uniform Civil Code: Goa has operated under a common civil code (the Portuguese Civil Code, 1867, retained post-1961 liberation) for all communities — making Goa India's only state with a long-standing uniform civil code, often cited as a working model.

- **Article 44 (DPSP)** — Directive Principle directing the state to 'endeavour to secure for citizens a uniform civil code'; non-justiciable; the constitutional basis for all UCC initiatives, including Uttarakhand's UCC Act 2024 and now West Bengal's proposed bill.
- **Uttarakhand UCC Act 2024** — India's first state-level Uniform Civil Code; covers marriage, divorce, inheritance, live-in relationship registration; exempts Scheduled Tribes; received Presidential assent; in force since February 2024; the template being studied/adapted by other states.

3. Ayodhya Case Will Have Long-Term Consequences for the Sangh Parivar

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GS 1 / GS 2: History: Ayodhya dispute; Ram Janmabhoomi movement; GS2: Polity — judicial process; Sangh Parivar; religious-political mobilisation.

‣ The Hindu analytical piece: Examining how the resolution of the Ayodhya dispute (SC verdict 2019, temple consecration January 2024) is reshaping the Sangh Parivar's (RSS-BJP-VHP ecosystem) political strategy and internal dynamics.

‣ The core argument: The Ram Mandir issue served as the Sangh Parivar's primary mass-mobilisation tool for nearly 40 years (1984 VHP resolution to build the temple → 2024 consecration); with the temple now built and consecrated, the movement has lost its central unifying cause — creating both opportunities (a 'victory narrative' for electoral capital) and challenges (what comes next to maintain ideological momentum?).

‣ Emerging successor causes: VHP and affiliated organisations have begun raising claims regarding the Gyanvapi Mosque (Varanasi) and Shahi Eidgah (Mathura) — the 'Kashi-Mathura baaki hai' (Kashi-Mathura remain) slogan, suggesting a continuation strategy targeting other disputed religious sites.

‣ The Places of Worship Act 1991 complication: This Act freezes the religious character of all places of worship as they existed on August 15, 1947 (with Ayodhya specifically exempted as litigation was already pending then); any new Sangh Parivar campaign on Gyanvapi or Mathura runs into this Act's legal bar — though litigation continues on procedural/survey grounds rather than direct title claims.

- The Sangh Parivar's internal recalibration: With Ram Mandir 'achieved,' debates within the RSS-VHP-BJP ecosystem reportedly include: (a) Shifting focus to cultural/civilizational issues (Sanskrit promotion, Indic knowledge systems, population policy); (b) Continuing the temple reclamation movement (Gyanvapi, Mathura, and a longer list of disputed sites;); (c) Consolidating electorally on economic development and governance performance rather than religious mobilisation.
- Places of Worship Act 1991 and ongoing litigation: Courts have permitted 'scientific survey' petitions (e.g., the Gyanvapi ASI survey, 2023-24) without technically violating the Act's prohibition on altering religious character — petitioners argue surveys are for 'historical research,' not title disputes; this has created a legal grey zone that the SC may eventually need to resolve definitively.
- Electoral dividend assessment: Political scientists analysing 2024 Lok Sabha results noted the BJP's performance in Ayodhya's own constituency (Faizabad) was a setback — the BJP lost the seat despite the temple's consecration months earlier; this complicates the assumption that religious mobilisation straightforwardly translates into electoral gains.

UPSC ANGLE

• Constitutional touchstone: The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act 1991 is itself under constitutional challenge (multiple PILs argue it violates the right to access courts and judicial remedy for ancient temple sites); the SC's eventual ruling on this Act's validity will determine whether the 'Kashi-Mathura' campaigns have a legal pathway forward.

• 1992 vs. 2024 contrast: The Babri Masjid demolition (December 6, 1992) was characterised by mob mobilisation and law-and-order breakdown; the 2024 temple consecration was a state-sanctioned, SC-mandated process — representing the Sangh Parivar's shift from extra-constitutional mobilisation to using constitutional/judicial pathways to achieve its goals.

- **Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act 1991** — Freezes religious character of all places of worship as on August 15, 1947; specifically excludes Ayodhya (litigation already pending); under constitutional challenge; central to disputes over Gyanvapi and Shahi Eidgah.

GS PAPER 2 — Governance · Health

4. Why Are States Opposing VB-G RAM G?

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GS 2: Governance: Rural Development; Centre-State Relations; Convergence Framework; Cooperative Federalism.

‣ Several states are opposing the Centre's VB-G RAM G Act 2025 (Vikasit Bharat — Gram Rojgar Aur Maulik Gram Vikas, or similar convergence nomenclature) — a new legal framework intended to converge multiple rural development schemes (MGNREGS, PMAY-G, PMGSY, Jal Jeevan Mission, NRLM) under a single implementation architecture.

‣ What the Act does: Creates a unified District/Block-level Convergence Committee structure mandating that all rural development schemes' fund flows, beneficiary selection, and monitoring go through a single integrated platform; intended to reduce duplication, improve targeting, and enable 'saturation' (100% coverage of eligible beneficiaries) approaches.

‣ State objections: (1) Federalism concern — States argue this centralises control over scheme implementation that previously had more state-level discretion (especially MGNREGS, which states administer with significant autonomy under the MGNREGA 2005 framework); (2) Administrative burden — convergence requires new IT systems, retraining of Gram Panchayat staff, and parallel administrative structures during transition; (3) Funding formula concerns — opposition-ruled states (Kerala, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Karnataka) allege that conditional fund releases tied to convergence compliance could be used to withhold funds for political reasons.

‣ PIB context (June 25-27): The Secretary, Rural Development chaired a 'High-Level Inter-Ministerial Consultation on Convergence Framework under VB-G RAM G Act, 2025' — suggesting the Centre is actively trying to address state concerns through consultation rather than unilateral imposition.

- MGNREGA's special status: The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (2005) is a rights-based legislation — guaranteeing 100 days of wage employment as a legal right, not merely a scheme; states worry that folding MGNREGA into a broader 'convergence' framework with discretionary central schemes (PMAY-G, PMGSY are not rights-based) could dilute MGNREGA's unique legal guarantee status.
- The 'one nation, one scheme architecture' debate: Centre's argument: Citizens shouldn't have to navigate 10+ different schemes with different eligibility criteria, application processes, and monitoring systems; a unified rural development architecture improves last-mile delivery. States' counter-argument: Rural development needs vary significantly by state (a coastal state's needs differ from a Himalayan or desert state); one-size-fits-all convergence could reduce states' ability to customise implementation for local conditions.
- Historical precedent: Similar federalism tensions arose with: GST (states lost fiscal autonomy over indirect taxes); Ayushman Bharat (some states like West Bengal initially opted out, citing branding and implementation control issues); the 15th Finance Commission's conditions on grants. VB-G RAM G fits this broader pattern of Centre-State friction over centralisation of welfare delivery.

UPSC ANGLE

• Cooperative vs. Competitive Federalism: NITI Aayog promotes 'cooperative federalism' (Centre and states collaborating) and 'competitive federalism' (states competing for central funds based on performance); the VB-G

RAM G convergence framework sits at this tension point — is it cooperative consultation or centrally-imposed competition?
• Finance Commission angle: The 16th Finance Commission (currently being constituted, recommendations due 2026 for the 2026-31 period) will need to address how conditional vs. unconditional transfers should be balanced — VB-G RAM G's convergence conditions could become a Finance Commission consideration.

- **MGNREGA 2005** — Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act; rights-based legislation guaranteeing 100 days wage employment to rural households; administered with significant state autonomy; states worry its unique legal status could be diluted by integration into broader convergence frameworks like VB-G RAM G.

5. Operational Secrecy in Wars Is a Must, But There Must Be Accountability

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GS 2 / GS 3: Governance: Military transparency; RTI exemptions; Operation Sindoor; civil-military relations; parliamentary oversight of defence.

▸ The Hindu editorial: Examining the tension between legitimate operational secrecy during military operations (such as Operation Sindoor, May 2025, and ongoing Pakistan-Afghanistan and Iran-related developments) and the democratic need for eventual accountability and transparency.
▸ The core argument: While real-time operational secrecy is essential (revealing troop movements, strike timings, or intelligence sources during active operations would endanger lives and operations), India's democratic accountability mechanisms for POST-operation review remain weak compared to other democracies.
▸ Comparative practice: US Congressional oversight committees (House and Senate Armed Services/Intelligence Committees) receive classified briefings even during ongoing operations, with sworn secrecy obligations; UK's Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament has statutory access to classified material for oversight; India lacks an equivalent standing parliamentary mechanism with security clearance access.
▸ India's current accountability gap: Post-operation reviews (e.g., after Balakot 2019, Operation Sindoor 2025) are conducted internally by the military and government, with very limited or no external/parliamentary scrutiny; Parliament's Standing Committee on Defence has very limited classified access; CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General) audits defence expenditure but not operational decisions.

- Why this matters now: Following India's May 2025 four-day conflict with Pakistan (Operation Sindoor) and the continuing AfPak and Hormuz crises, there have been public claims and counter-claims about operational outcomes (casualty figures, strike effectiveness, decision-making) that cannot be independently verified due to the absence of any institutional mechanism for retrospective, classified parliamentary review.
- Proposed reforms: (1) A Joint Parliamentary Committee on National Security with statutory access to classified post-operation reports (modelled on UK's ISC); (2) A time-bound declassification policy — operational details automatically declassified after a fixed period (e.g., 25-30 years, as practiced for archival government records) unless specifically exempted; (3) An independent Inspector-General for military operations review, distinct from the chain of command.
- The RTI Act and Section 8(1)(a): RTI Act 2005 exempts information that would 'prejudicially affect sovereignty and integrity of India, security of state, strategic, scientific or economic interests' — a broad exemption frequently invoked to deny information about military operations, sometimes well beyond legitimate security needs.

UPSC ANGLE
• Kargil Review Committee (2000): Set up after the 1999 Kargil War to review intelligence and operational failures; its report was a landmark in India's (still limited) tradition of post-conflict institutional review; but such reviews remain ad hoc rather than institutionalised.
• Civil-military relations balance: The editorial connects to the broader theme of India's civilian control of the military combined with weak institutional mechanisms for legislative oversight of military and intelligence operations — a gap compared to mature democracies' standing oversight committees.

- 📌 **RTI Act Section 8(1)(a)** — Exempts information prejudicial to sovereignty, security, strategic/scientific/economic interests from RTI disclosure; broadly invoked for military/security matters; criticised for being used to avoid legitimate post-operation accountability.
- 📌 **Kargil Review Committee (2000)** — Set up after the 1999 Kargil War; reviewed intelligence and operational failures; landmark in India's institutional self-review tradition; remains an ad hoc rather than standing mechanism.

6. India Must Prioritise Harm Reduction From Drug Abuse

[TH] Page 8

GS 2: Health/Social Justice: Drug Policy; Harm Reduction; NDPS Act; Public Health Approach to Addiction; Needle Exchange Programmes.

‣ The Hindu editorial (in the context of June 26 International Day Against Drug Abuse and the NCORD Vision Document 2026-29): Arguing that India's drug policy remains overwhelmingly enforcement-focused (NDPS Act's punitive framework) while neglecting harm reduction — a public health approach proven effective globally.

‣ What is harm reduction: A set of practical strategies aimed at reducing the negative consequences of drug use WITHOUT necessarily requiring abstinence — includes needle/syringe exchange programmes (preventing HIV/Hepatitis C transmission among injecting drug users), opioid substitution therapy (OST, e.g., methadone/buprenorphine for heroin users), supervised consumption sites, and naloxone distribution (reverses opioid overdose).

‣ India's current harm reduction infrastructure: NACO (National AIDS Control Organisation) operates needle-syringe exchange and OST programmes targeting injecting drug users (IDUs) — primarily in northeastern states (Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland) and Punjab, where injecting drug use and associated HIV transmission are concentrated; but coverage remains limited (estimated 20-30% of IDUs reached) and funding is inconsistent.

‣ The enforcement-harm reduction tension: NDPS Act's strict criminalisation of drug possession (even small quantities can trigger imprisonment) creates a structural barrier — drug users avoid harm reduction services for fear of arrest, undermining public health outreach; the editorial calls for 'decriminalisation of personal use quantities' to enable better health engagement, even while maintaining strict penalties for trafficking.

- Global evidence: Portugal's 2001 decriminalisation of personal drug use (replacing criminal penalties with administrative/health referrals) led to: significant reductions in HIV transmission among drug users; reduced drug-related deaths; increased treatment-seeking. Switzerland's heroin-assisted treatment and supervised injection sites similarly reduced overdose deaths and public health costs.
- India's HIV burden among drug users: NACO data shows HIV prevalence among injecting drug users is significantly higher (6-9% in some northeastern states) than the general population (0.2%); needle-sharing is a major transmission vector; harm reduction (clean needle access) directly addresses this.
- NCORD Vision Document 2026-29 gap: While the Vision Document (June 26 PIB) emphasises supply-side enforcement and demand-side 'Nasha Mukt Bharat' awareness campaigns, the editorial argues it underemphasises harm reduction as a THIRD pillar alongside supply reduction and demand reduction — the global 'three pillars' framework (supply reduction, demand reduction, harm reduction) recommended by UNODC.

UPSC ANGLE

• UNODC's three-pillar framework: Supply reduction (law enforcement, interdiction); demand reduction (prevention, education, treatment); harm reduction (minimising negative health/social consequences for those who continue to use). India's NDPS-centric approach emphasises pillar 1 heavily, pillar 2 moderately, and pillar 3 minimally — an imbalance the editorial seeks to correct.

• NDPS Act 1985 amendments needed: Section 27 (punishment for consumption) treats all drug use as criminal; a 2014 amendment introduced 'mixed quantity' calculation reforms but did not fundamentally shift toward decriminalisation of personal use; reform proposals remain pending.

- 📌 **Harm Reduction** — Public health approach minimising negative health/social consequences of drug use without requiring abstinence; includes needle exchange, opioid substitution therapy (OST), naloxone

distribution; distinct from and complementary to enforcement and prevention approaches; NACO implements limited harm reduction programmes in India.

- **NACO (National AIDS Control Organisation)** — Under MoHFW; implements India's HIV/AIDS prevention and control programmes; operates needle-syringe exchange and OST for injecting drug users as part of targeted intervention for high-risk groups; key harm reduction implementer in India.

7. On the Delay in the India-U.S. Trade Deal

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GS 2 / GS 3: IR: India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement (BTA); negotiation sticking points; tariff policy; USTR; GS3: Economy — trade negotiations.

- The Hindu analysis: Despite USTR Jamieson Greer's June 23-25 Delhi visit producing a joint statement of 'significant progress,' and a new August 15, 2026 deadline (Indian Independence Day) for an interim trade agreement, the deal remains unsigned — the editorial examines why.
- Three core sticking points remain unresolved: (1) Equalisation Levy — India's 2% digital services tax on foreign tech companies (Google, Meta, Amazon); US insists on its complete removal as a precondition; India has offered phased reduction but not complete removal; (2) Agricultural market access — US wants greater access for corn, soybean, dairy, and ethanol; India's politically sensitive farm lobby resists, especially ahead of state elections; (3) H-1B visa and professional mobility — India wants commitments on H-1B visa caps/processing for Indian IT professionals; US Congress's immigration politics make this commitment difficult for USTR to offer.
- The 'walking back' pattern: This is the 3rd missed deadline for an India-US trade deal since talks began in 2025 (initial deadline February 2026 missed; revised April 2026 deadline missed; now August 15, 2026 deadline) — reflecting the genuine difficulty of bridging structurally different economic interests.
- Domestic political dynamics: In the US, the Trump administration faces pressure from agricultural states' Congressional representatives demanding market access concessions from India before any deal; in India, the agriculture ministry and farm lobby groups have signalled strong resistance to opening dairy and grain markets, citing the precedent-setting risk for future trade negotiations (EU, UK already accepted dairy exclusions for India).

- The asymmetry argument: The editorial notes a structural asymmetry — India successfully negotiated dairy exclusions with UK (CETA) and is seeking similar exclusions with the US; but the US, as India's largest single-country export market ($85 billion in FY26), has more leverage to insist on reciprocal agricultural access than UK or EU did.
- Equalisation Levy context: India's 2% levy (introduced 2020, on e-commerce supply/services by non-resident companies with India revenue exceeding Rs 2 crore) has generated friction with the US since inception; previous India-US understanding (October 2021) had committed India to phase out the levy upon global implementation of OECD's Pillar 1 framework — but Pillar 1's slow global implementation has left this commitment in limbo.
- What 'interim agreement' might look like: Trade negotiators suggest a possible interim deal could cover: immediate tariff reductions on a limited list of non-agricultural goods; a phased roadmap (not immediate elimination) for the equalisation levy; deferred/separate negotiation track for agriculture and H-1B issues — essentially achieving a partial deal by August 15 while continuing talks on the hardest issues.

UPSC ANGLE

• India-US trade relationship scale: $190 billion total bilateral trade (FY26); India's trade surplus with US: ~$45 billion; US is India's largest single-country trading partner and largest export destination; any prolonged delay or failure has significant economic stakes for both sides.
• Comparison with India-UK and India-EU tracks: India-UK CETA took 3 years (signed) — effective July 15, 2026; India-EU FTA target is December 2026 (in active negotiation since 2022); India-US talks, despite starting more recently, face the most political friction due to the sheer size and political sensitivity of the agriculture and digital tax issues.

- **Equalisation Levy** — India's 2% tax on e-commerce supply/services by non-resident digital companies (Google, Meta, Amazon) introduced 2020; principal sticking point in India-US BTA talks; US insists on full removal; India has offered only phased reduction.

8. Has RBI Changed the Rules for Scam Compensation?

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GS 3: Economy: Banking regulation; digital fraud; RBI compensation rules; consumer protection in banking.

‣ Following up on the RBI's announced Digital Payment Fraud Compensation Rules (covered June 26), The Hindu provides further clarity on what has actually changed versus what remains the same.
‣ What HAS changed: (1) Mandatory 24-hour acknowledgment of fraud complaints (previously no fixed timeline); (2) Conditional liability extension to 'authorised fraud' cases where banks failed to deploy prescribed fraud-detection measures (previously authorised fraud = zero bank liability in almost all cases); (3) Time-bound 45-day final resolution (previously could drag on indefinitely).
‣ What has NOT changed: Pure customer negligence cases (e.g., voluntarily sharing OTP/PIN with a scammer) still result in customer bearing full loss; the new rules do not create blanket compensation for all fraud — liability allocation still depends on a negligence analysis (bank's negligence vs. customer's negligence vs. neither's fault).
‣ Effective date: January 2027 — meaning the rules are not yet operational; banks have a 6-month implementation runway to deploy required fraud-detection systems (AI-based mule account detection, transaction velocity checks, cross-border transfer alerts).

- The 'zero liability' misconception: Media coverage of RBI's announcement created some public confusion suggesting 'all digital fraud will now be compensated' — this is NOT accurate; the rules create a more structured, time-bound, and bank-accountability-inclusive framework, but a three-way liability allocation (bank negligence / customer negligence / shared) remains the operative principle, not automatic compensation.
- Comparison with existing limited liability circular (2017): RBI's 2017 circular on customer liability for unauthorised electronic transactions already provided zero liability for unauthorised transactions reported within 3 days, and limited liability for delayed reporting; the 2026 rules EXTEND this same protective philosophy to certain categories of 'authorised' fraud (where deception, not unauthorised access, caused the loss) — a meaningfully NEW protection, but built on existing foundations rather than a complete overhaul.

UPSC ANGLE
• Practical advice for consumers: Report fraud immediately (within 24 hours ideally, definitely within 3 days) to maximise protection under both the existing 2017 circular and the new 2027 rules; never share OTP/PIN with anyone claiming to be from a bank, RBI, or government agency (no legitimate institution asks for this); escalate unresolved complaints to the RBI Banking Ombudsman after 30 days.

GS PAPER 3 — Defence · Economy · Environment

9. What India's 12 'Operationally Deployed' Nuclear Warheads Really Mean

[TH] Page 11

GS 3: Defence: Nuclear doctrine; SIPRI assessment; No First Use; Nuclear Command Authority; SSBN deterrence patrols.

‣ SIPRI Yearbook 2026 (released early June, analysed in this Hindu piece): For the first time, SIPRI has classified 12 of India's estimated 190 nuclear warheads as 'operationally deployed' — meaning mounted on delivery systems or co-located with operational forces, rather than stored separately as has been India's longstanding peacetime practice.
‣ India's total estimated arsenal: ~190 warheads (up from 180 in 2025) — a 'small increase,' according to SIPRI, consistent with India's stated 'credible minimum deterrence' rather than an arms race posture.

‣ The key shift: SIPRI assesses that India 'may be shifting in the direction of mating some of its warheads with their launchers in peacetime' — specifically pointing to evidence of nuclear warheads aboard an SSBN (nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine) conducting deterrence patrols.

‣ India's Government response: Neither confirmed nor denied SIPRI's specific numbers; no official change to India's nuclear doctrine has been announced — the doctrine of 'No First Use' (NFU) and 'Credible Minimum Deterrence' (CMD), articulated in 2003, remains formally unchanged.

Understanding 'Operationally Deployed' vs. 'Stockpiled'

- Historical Indian practice: Since India's 1998 nuclear tests (Pokhran-II) and the formal 2003 doctrine, India has maintained a deliberate separation between nuclear warheads (held by the Strategic Forces Command in secure storage) and delivery systems (missiles, aircraft) — warheads would only be mated with delivery systems during an actual crisis or war, NOT during peacetime. This is sometimes called a 'de-mated' or 'recessed' deterrent posture.
- Why de-mated posture made sense for India: (1) Consistent with No First Use — since India commits to never striking first, there is less urgency to maintain warheads in ready-to-fire status; (2) Safety — separating warheads from launchers significantly reduces accidental/unauthorised launch risk; (3) Political signalling — demonstrates restraint to the international community, distinguishing India from hair-trigger postures like US-Russia Cold War-era deployments.
- Why the SHIFT to limited deployment now: (1) SSBN-based deterrence requires SOME readiness — a submarine on patrol cannot practically 'fetch' a warhead from a land-based storage facility in a crisis; maintaining credible sea-based second-strike capability inherently requires SOME warheads to be deployed with the platform; (2) Two-front threat calculus — China's expanding nuclear arsenal (SIPRI: 600 warheads, 34 deployed, growing fastest globally) and continued India-Pakistan tensions (the May 2025 4-day conflict) create pressure for faster-response capability; (3) Strategic signalling — demonstrating deployed capability may be intended to reinforce deterrence credibility to both China and Pakistan.

India's Nuclear Triad: Current Status

- Land: Agni series missiles (Agni-I to Agni-V, with Agni-V having 5,000+ km range, MIRV-capable); land-based component under Strategic Forces Command (SFC).
- Air: Mirage 2000 and Su-30MKI aircraft modified for nuclear weapon delivery (gravity bombs); least credible/survivable leg of the triad.
- Sea: 3 operational SSBNs — INS Arihant (commissioned 2016), INS Arighaat (commissioned 2024), INS Aridhaman (entered service April 2026); each carries K-15 (750 km) or K-4 (3,500 km) submarine-launched ballistic missiles; SSBNs are considered the most survivable leg (hardest to detect/destroy, ensuring second-strike capability even after a first strike on land/air assets); India's S5 programme aims to develop 6-8 SSBNs eventually.

UPSC ANGLE

• No First Use (NFU) Doctrine — does deployment change it? Formally, NO — NFU is a doctrinal commitment about WHEN India would use nuclear weapons (only in retaliation), not about HOW READY the weapons are kept; operational deployment increases readiness/responsiveness without necessarily changing the 'no first strike' commitment. However, critics argue that 'mating' warheads with launchers blurs the line and could be perceived by adversaries as eroding the NFU's credibility (since a 'ready to fire' posture is harder to distinguish from preparing a first strike during a crisis).

• China's much larger deployed arsenal: SIPRI's data — China has 34 deployed warheads (up from 24 in 2025) within a 600-warhead total stockpile that is also the fastest-growing globally; Pakistan's exact figures are less transparent but estimated around 170 warheads; India's 12 deployed warheads is proportionate to but smaller than China's and reflects measured rather than aggressive escalation.

- **SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)** — Independent international institute researching conflict, armaments, arms control, disarmament; publishes the authoritative annual SIPRI Yearbook tracking global nuclear arsenals; its 2026 Yearbook is the source for the '12 deployed warheads' assessment.
- **No First Use (NFU) + Credible Minimum Deterrence (CMD)** — India's nuclear doctrine, officially articulated January 2003; NFU = India will not be the first to use nuclear weapons; CMD = maintain a credible but minimal deterrent (not matching adversary numbers); both remain formally unchanged despite SIPRI's deployment assessment.

- **SSBN (Ship, Submersible, Ballistic, Nuclear)** — Nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine; India operates 3 — INS Arihant, INS Arighaat, INS Aridhaman; most survivable leg of nuclear triad (hardest to detect/destroy); enables credible second-strike/retaliatory capability; central to SIPRI's deployment assessment.

10. Union Cabinet Okays Rs 30,000 Crore Additional Investment in NIIF

[TH] Page 12

GS 3: Economy: Infrastructure financing; NIIF; Sovereign Wealth Funds; Infrastructure Investment; FDI in infrastructure.

‣ Union Cabinet approved an additional Rs 30,000 crore investment in the National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF) — to be deployed for creating new specialised investment funds targeting infrastructure, manufacturing, and green energy sectors.
‣ NIIF background: Established 2015 as India's quasi-sovereign wealth fund; structured as a fund-of-funds with the Government of India as anchor investor (typically 49% in each fund, with remainder from domestic and international institutional investors); designed to crowd in long-term capital (pension funds, sovereign wealth funds, insurance companies) for India's infrastructure needs.
‣ NIIF's existing fund structure: Master Fund (core infrastructure — roads, ports, renewable energy); Fund of Funds (investing in other infrastructure-focused funds); Strategic Fund (growth equity in infrastructure-adjacent sectors). Total AUM (Assets Under Management) before this addition: approximately Rs 1.1 lakh crore.
‣ New fund creation purpose: The additional Rs 30,000 crore is intended to seed NEW funds targeting: (a) climate/green energy transition infrastructure (solar, green hydrogen, battery storage — connecting to National Green Hydrogen Mission); (b) semiconductor and electronics manufacturing infrastructure (supporting India Semiconductor Mission); (c) post-Hormuz energy security infrastructure (SPR expansion, alternate fuel infrastructure).

- Why NIIF matters: India needs an estimated $1.7 trillion in infrastructure investment by 2030 (National Infrastructure Pipeline estimate); government budgetary resources alone cannot meet this; NIIF's fund-of-funds model leverages each government rupee to attract 2-4x additional private/foreign capital — a capital multiplier effect.
- International investor base: NIIF has attracted investments from sovereign wealth funds including Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), Singapore's Temasek, Qatar Investment Authority, and Canada's CDPQ (Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec) — demonstrating international confidence in India's infrastructure growth story.
- Connection to post-Hormuz economic resilience: The new fund creation explicitly responds to lessons from the Hormuz crisis (Feb-June 2026) — energy security infrastructure (SPR expansion, domestic fertiliser production capacity, alternative energy) requires patient, long-term capital that NIIF's structure is designed to provide.

UPSC ANGLE
• NIIF vs. National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP): NIP (launched 2019) is a PROJECT list (Rs 111 lakh crore of identified infrastructure projects 2020-25); NIIF is a FINANCING VEHICLE that helps fund such projects; they are complementary — NIP identifies what needs to be built, NIIF helps finance how.
• Comparison with other Sovereign Wealth Fund-adjacent vehicles: NIIF is sometimes compared to Singapore's Temasek or GIC, though NIIF is smaller in scale and more narrowly focused on infrastructure rather than broad sovereign wealth management; India does not have a true oil-revenue-funded sovereign wealth fund (unlike Gulf states) since India is a net oil importer, not exporter.

- **NIIF (National Investment and Infrastructure Fund)** — India's quasi-sovereign wealth fund-of-funds; established 2015; Government anchors ~49% in each fund; attracts global institutional capital (ADIA, Temasek, QIA, CDPQ); funds infrastructure across Master Fund, Fund of Funds, Strategic Fund structures; June 2026 saw Rs 30,000 crore additional investment for new green/semiconductor/energy security funds.

11. Only Electric Two-Wheelers to Ply on Delhi Roads From 2028

GS 3: Environment: Delhi air pollution; EV transition; vehicle electrification policy; urban transport.

‣ Delhi Government announced that from 2028, only electric two-wheelers will be permitted for new registrations on Delhi roads — effectively phasing out new petrol/CNG two-wheeler sales in the capital within the next ~18 months.
‣ Why two-wheelers specifically: Two-wheelers constitute approximately TWO-THIRDS of Delhi's total registered vehicle fleet (roughly 50-55 lakh of Delhi's ~80 lakh vehicles); they contribute disproportionately to Delhi's vehicular air pollution (PM2.5, PM10, NOx) despite individually smaller engine sizes, due to sheer numbers and older/less efficient engine technology in much of the fleet.
‣ Policy mechanism: New two-wheeler registrations from 2028 will be restricted to electric vehicles only; existing petrol/CNG two-wheelers can continue to operate (no forced retirement) but will face the same 10-15 year age-based deregistration rules under NGT/SC orders that already apply to all Delhi vehicles.
‣ This builds on Delhi's existing EV Policy 2020 (revised 2023): which provided purchase subsidies, road tax/registration fee waivers, and scrappage incentives for EVs — the 2028 mandate represents a shift from incentive-based to mandate-based EV transition.

Why Two-Wheelers Matter So Much for Delhi's Air Quality

- Delhi's air pollution sources (per IIT-Kanpur/TERI source apportionment studies): Vehicular emissions contribute 20-40% of Delhi's PM2.5 (varying seasonally — higher in non-stubble-burning months); within vehicular emissions, two-wheelers contribute disproportionately to NOx and unburnt hydrocarbons due to less efficient 2-stroke and older 4-stroke engines (especially pre-BS-VI vehicles).
- The 'last mile' EV transition challenge: Two-wheelers are predominantly used by middle and lower-income commuters for whom upfront EV cost (even with subsidies) remains a significant barrier compared to four-wheeler buyers; battery range anxiety and charging infrastructure gaps are more acute for two-wheeler users who may not have dedicated parking/charging access (especially in unauthorised colonies and dense urban areas).
- Battery swapping as a solution: To address charging infrastructure gaps, Delhi is simultaneously expanding battery-swapping infrastructure (swap a depleted battery for a charged one in ~2 minutes, similar to LPG cylinder exchange) — companies like Battery Smart, Sun Mobility are key infrastructure partners; National Battery Swapping Policy (NITI Aayog draft) provides the regulatory framework.

Broader Context: Delhi's Air Pollution Battle

- GRAP (Graded Response Action Plan): Delhi's stage-based pollution emergency response system (Stage I-IV based on AQI); already restricts older vehicles, construction activity, and certain industries during high pollution periods; the 2028 EV mandate is a STRUCTURAL/preventive measure complementing GRAP's REACTIVE emergency measures.
- CAQM (Commission for Air Quality Management): Statutory body (2021 Act) covering Delhi-NCR; coordinates pollution control across Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, UP, Rajasthan (NCR states); the two-wheeler EV mandate would need CAQM coordination since vehicles registered in neighbouring NCR states also ply on Delhi roads.

UPSC ANGLE
• FAME-II and PM E-DRIVE: Central government's EV incentive schemes — FAME-II (2019-2024, concluded) and PM E-DRIVE (2024-2026, Rs 10,900 crore) provide purchase subsidies for two-wheelers, three-wheelers, buses; Delhi's mandate-based approach complements these central demand-incentive schemes.
• Two-wheeler EV market share (2026): Approximately 12-15% of new two-wheeler sales nationally are now electric (up from <1% in 2019) — driven by companies like Ola Electric, TVS iQube, Bajaj Chetak, Ather; Delhi's mandate would dramatically accelerate this for the capital specifically.

- **CAQM (Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR)** — Statutory body established 2021 covering Delhi-NCR; coordinates air quality management across Delhi and neighbouring states (Haryana, Punjab, UP, Rajasthan); relevant to enforcing any Delhi-specific vehicle mandate given inter-state vehicle movement.
- **GRAP (Graded Response Action Plan)** — Delhi-NCR's stage-based emergency air pollution response system (4 stages based on AQI severity); imposes graduated restrictions (construction, vehicles, industry) as pollution worsens; reactive measure complementing structural measures like the 2028 EV mandate.

12. As Europe Reels From Record Heatwave, Why Air-Conditioning Has Become a Political Flashpoint

[IE] Page Online

GS 1 / GS 3: Geography: Heatwaves; climate change; GS3: Environment — energy policy, adaptation; comparative climate policy.

‣ Europe is experiencing a record-breaking heatwave (late June 2026) with temperatures exceeding 45°C in parts of Spain, Italy, and southern France — triggering a political debate about air-conditioning adoption, which remains far less common in Europe than in the US or Asia.
‣ The AC adoption gap: Only ~20% of European households have air-conditioning (compared to 90%+ in the US and rapidly rising rates in India and China); historically, Europe's temperate climate made AC less necessary, and strong environmental/energy-conservation culture has actively discouraged AC adoption.
‣ The political flashpoint: As heatwaves become more frequent and severe due to climate change, a debate has emerged: (a) Pro-AC argument — heat-related deaths are rising (Europe recorded 60,000+ excess deaths in the 2022 heatwave alone; 2026's heatwave is tracking similarly severe); AC is a public health necessity, not a luxury; (b) Anti-AC argument — widespread AC adoption would dramatically increase electricity demand and undermine Europe's climate commitments (EU's 'Fit for 55' programme, net-zero by 2050); AC units also use HFC refrigerants with high global warming potential if not properly managed.
‣ Government response variance: Southern European countries (Spain, Italy, Greece) — more frequently affected by extreme heat — are providing AC subsidies for vulnerable populations (elderly, low-income); Northern European countries (Germany, France) remain more resistant, citing energy security concerns post-Russia gas cutoff and climate commitments.

- Why this matters for India: India's own AC adoption is rising rapidly (from ~8% of households in 2018 to estimated 25%+ by 2026) amid worsening heatwaves; India's situation differs from Europe's because: (a) India's electricity grid increasingly relies on renewable energy (Grid India's gas-power balancing strategy, covered June 25) which can absorb AC-driven demand growth more sustainably than Europe's currently gas-constrained grid; (b) India's per-capita AC penetration remains far below saturation, meaning growth is from a much lower base.
- India's Cooling Action Plan (ICAP, 2019): India was among the first countries globally to publish a national Cooling Action Plan — addressing the AC adoption dilemma proactively: promotes energy-efficient AC technology (5-star rated units, India's Bureau of Energy Efficiency standards); promotes passive cooling building design (reduces AC dependency); manages refrigerant transition away from high-GWP HFCs (Kigali Amendment to Montreal Protocol commitments).
- The Kigali Amendment connection: India ratified the Kigali Amendment (2016, entered into force 2019) to phase down HFC refrigerants used in AC units; India's phase-down schedule (starting 2032, more gradual than developed countries' 2019 start) reflects India's 'common but differentiated responsibilities' position in climate negotiations — directly relevant to the AC-climate tension Europe is now grappling with.

UPSC ANGLE

• Urban Heat Island effect: Cities are significantly hotter than surrounding rural areas due to concrete/asphalt heat absorption, reduced vegetation, and waste heat from buildings/vehicles; both European cities (Madrid, Rome) and Indian cities (Delhi, Ahmedabad) experience this effect, compounding heatwave severity in urban areas specifically.
• Heat Action Plans: India's Ahmedabad pioneered South Asia's first Heat Action Plan (2013) after a deadly 2010 heatwave — providing an early-warning system, public cooling centres, and health worker training; now adopted by 100+ Indian cities; could be a model for European cities now facing similar adaptation needs.

- **India's Cooling Action Plan (ICAP, 2019)** — India's national strategy addressing rising cooling/AC demand sustainably; promotes energy-efficient ACs, passive building design, refrigerant transition; among the first national cooling plans globally; relevant comparator to Europe's current AC adoption debate.

- 📌 **Kigali Amendment (2016)** — Amendment to the Montreal Protocol; phases down HFC refrigerants (high global warming potential) used in AC/refrigeration; India's phase-down begins 2032 (developing country timeline) vs. earlier start for developed countries; reflects CBDR-RC principle in climate governance.

PRELIMS IN FOCUS

India's Nuclear Arsenal — SIPRI 2026 Key Numbers	Total Indian warheads: ~190 (2026), up from 180 (2025). Operationally deployed: 12 (FIRST TIME classified as deployed by SIPRI). Doctrine: No First Use (NFU) + Credible Minimum Deterrence (CMD) — officially articulated 2003; UNCHANGED despite deployment shift. Nuclear Triad: Land (Agni series, SFC); Air (Mirage 2000, Su-30MKI); Sea (3 SSBNs — Arihant, Arighaat, Aridhaman [April 2026]). S5 programme: Future SSBN class; target 6-8 boats eventually. Global comparison (SIPRI 2026): USA 1,770 deployed; Russia 1,796 deployed; France 280 deployed; UK 120 deployed; China 34 deployed (600 total, fastest-growing); India 12 deployed (190 total); Pakistan ~170 total (deployment status less clear). Global total: ~12,187 warheads; ~9,745 in military stockpiles. Nuclear Command Authority: PM heads Political Council; Strategic Forces Command (SFC) executes.
VB-G RAM G Act 2025 + Rural Development Convergence	VB-G RAM G: New Act (2025) seeking to converge multiple rural development schemes (MGNREGS, PMAY-G, PMGSY, JJM, NRLM) under unified District/Block Convergence Committees. Goal: Reduce duplication; enable saturation (100% eligible beneficiary coverage); single IT platform for fund flow, beneficiary selection, monitoring. State objections: Federalism (centralises control); administrative burden (new systems, retraining); funding formula concerns (conditional release fears). MGNREGA's special status: Rights-based law (2005) — legal guarantee of 100 days employment; states worry convergence with discretionary schemes (PMAY-G, PMGSY) could dilute this unique status. June 2026 development: High-Level Inter-Ministerial Consultation held to address state concerns through dialogue.
Uniform Civil Code — Key Facts	Article 44 (DPSP): Directs state to 'endeavour to secure UCC throughout India'; non-justiciable. Legislative competence: Concurrent List (List III), Entry 5 — marriage, divorce, succession, adoption, wills. Uttarakhand UCC Act 2024: India's FIRST state-level UCC; covers marriage/divorce/inheritance/live-in registration; exempts Scheduled Tribes; Presidential assent received; in force since February 2024. Goa: India's only state with a longstanding uniform civil code (Portuguese Civil Code, 1867, retained post-1961). West Bengal (2026): Announced UCC bill — would be 2nd state to legislate, FIRST non-BJP state. Key SC cases: Shah Bano (1985) → Muslim Women Act 1986; Sarla Mudgal (1995) — both highlighted UCC's gender justice rationale. 22nd Law Commission: Received 8.5 million+ public responses on UCC consultation (2023) — most ever for a Law Commission consultation.
BRO + Strategic Border Infrastructure	BRO (Border Roads Organisation): Established May 7, 1960; under Ministry of Defence; builds/maintains roads, bridges, tunnels, airfields in border areas. Key BRO Projects: Project BRAHMANK (16th Raising Day, June 2026); Project Himank (Ladakh); Project Arunank (Arunachal Pradesh); Project Dantak (Bhutan — only BRO project operating in a foreign country); Project Vartak, Swastik, Beacon, Setuk. Strategic tunnels: Atal Tunnel (Rohtang, Himachal); Sela Tunnel (Arunachal Pradesh); Zoji La Tunnel + Shinku La Tunnel (under construction, Ladakh all-weather connectivity). Relevance to IBGs: 48-hour deployment doctrine for new Integrated Battle Groups (July 2026) depends critically on BRO's all-weather road network to forward areas.
Delhi EV Two-Wheeler Mandate (2028) — Key Facts	Policy: Only electric two-wheelers permitted for NEW registrations in Delhi from 2028; existing petrol/CNG two-wheelers can continue (no forced retirement) subject to existing age-based deregistration rules. Why two-wheelers: ~65% (two-thirds) of Delhi's ~80 lakh registered vehicles are two-wheelers; disproportionate contributor to NOx and unburnt hydrocarbon emissions. Delhi EV Policy 2020 (revised 2023): Purchase subsidies, road tax/registration waivers, scrappage incentives — precursor to the 2028 mandate. CAQM: Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR (2021 Act) — coordinates Delhi-NCR

pollution policy, relevant given inter-state vehicle movement. GRAP: Graded Response Action Plan — Delhi's REACTIVE pollution emergency system (4 stages); 2028 EV mandate is a STRUCTURAL/preventive complement. Central schemes: FAME-II (2019-24, concluded) + PM E-DRIVE (2024-26, Rs 10,900 crore) provide demand-side EV incentives nationally.

MAPPING — PLACES IN NEWS

Place	Why in News / Key Facts
Paktia, Paktika, Kunar (Afghanistan)	Sites of Pakistani strikes (June 28-29, 2026) against alleged TTP/Jamaat-ul-Ahrar hideouts; Afghan officials claim 36 civilians killed, 160+ wounded; Chamkani district in Paktia worst-affected; these provinces border Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and have historically been militant safe-haven areas due to porous Durand Line.
Karachi, Pakistan	Site of June 27 militant attack on Pakistan Rangers' regional headquarters (3 soldiers killed); attack claimed by Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (TTP breakaway faction); triggered Pakistan's retaliatory cross-border operation; Pakistan's largest city and main port, in Sindh province.
Dehradun, Uttarakhand	Capital of Uttarakhand; site of India's first state-level UCC implementation (UCC Act 2024, in force since February 2024); the template being referenced as West Bengal considers its own UCC bill.
Faizabad (Ayodhya), Uttar Pradesh	Ayodhya's parliamentary constituency; BJP's 2024 Lok Sabha loss here despite the Ram Mandir consecration (January 2024) is cited as complicating the assumption that religious mobilisation straightforwardly drives electoral outcomes; relevant to the Sangh Parivar consequences analysis.
Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu (recurring)	Continues to be relevant as India's nuclear/strategic technology hub (FBTR, IGCAR — covered June 27); connects to the broader nuclear modernisation context discussed in the SIPRI warheads analysis.
Madrid/Rome (Southern Europe)	Epicentres of the record June 2026 European heatwave (45°C+ temperatures); driving the air-conditioning political debate; Spain and Italy providing AC subsidies for vulnerable populations, contrasting with German/French resistance citing energy security and climate commitments.
Ahmedabad, Gujarat	Pioneer of South Asia's first Heat Action Plan (2013, post-2010 deadly heatwave); cited as a potential model for European cities now facing comparable heat adaptation challenges; now over 100 Indian cities have adopted similar Heat Action Plans.
Bajaur, Pakistan	Source area cited for the Karachi Rangers attack facilitation, according to Pakistani investigators; a tribal district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa near the Afghan border; historically a TTP and militant stronghold; illustrates the cross-border facilitation networks central to the Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict.