UPSC with SAURABH KAUSHIK

Current Affairs Notes · 26 June 2026

The Hindu · Indian Express · PIB | 16 Topics | GS 1 · 2 · 3 + Prelims + Mapping

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

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PIB HIGHLIGHTS — 25-26 JUNE 2026 (Curated for UPSC)

1. SAMVIDHAN HATYA DIWAS — 51st Anniversary of the Emergency (June 25, 1975)

✓ Ministry of Culture commemorated 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' (Constitution Murder Day) — marking the 51st anniversary of the Emergency proclaimed by PM Indira Gandhi on June 25, 1975.

✓ The Emergency (June 25, 1975 – March 21, 1977): Declared under Article 352 of the Constitution (proclamation of Emergency); lasted 21 months; suspended fundamental rights (Articles 19, 20, 21 — though 20 and 21 were held not suspendable in ADM Jabalpur case, later overruled in Puttaswamy 2017); press censorship; political opponents arrested under MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act) and DIR (Defence and Internal Rules).

✓ Constitutional changes during Emergency: 42nd Amendment 1976 (the most controversial — added 'socialist,' 'secular,' 'integrity' to Preamble; Article 368A made constitutional amendments non-justiciable; extended Lok Sabha term to 6 years) — most provisions later reversed by 44th Amendment 1978.

✓ 44th Amendment 1978 (Janata Party): Reversed most 42nd Amendment changes; replaced 'internal disturbance' with 'armed rebellion' as a ground for Emergency (making Emergency harder to invoke); Article 20 and 21 cannot be suspended even during Emergency (codified post-Puttaswamy); restored 5-year Lok Sabha term.

✓ 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' name: The current government renamed the day from 'Black Day' to 'Samvidhan Hatya Diwas' in 2023 — emphasising the constitutional harm of the Emergency; PM Modi shares personal tribute posts on this day; the day has become an annual political marker.

✓ GS2 Polity Angle: Article 352; Emergency provisions; 42nd vs. 44th Amendments; Preamble changes; Kesavananda Bharati (basic structure) and its subsequent relevance; ADM Jabalpur case (HC judgment that Articles 20, 21 suspended during Emergency) vs. Puttaswamy 2017 (overruled).

2. BRICS 11th Energy Ministers Meeting — India Hosts in Gurugram

✓ India hosted the 11th BRICS Energy Ministers Meeting in Gurugram, Haryana under India's BRICS Chairship 2026; hosted by Power Minister Manohar Lal Khattar.

✓ Agenda: Post-Hormuz energy security framework for BRICS members; clean energy transition pathways; green hydrogen cooperation; nuclear energy expansion (NTPC partnerships); critical minerals for clean energy (lithium, cobalt, graphite — connecting to the 56 mineral block auctions).

✓ Key outcome: BRICS 'Clean Energy Charter' — a declaration of intent by all BRICS energy ministers on: renewable energy cooperation; joint clean technology development; energy system resilience to future supply disruptions (lessons from Hormuz crisis).

✓ India's energy leadership: India showcased its 274+ GW RE capacity; 500 GW by 2030 NDC target; National Green Hydrogen Mission (5 MMTPA by 2030); BRICS nations collectively consume ~40% of global energy and produce ~38% of global CO_2 — their cooperation is critical for global climate targets.

✓ GS2/GS3 Angle: BRICS Energy; clean energy cooperation; India's energy targets; renewable energy; green hydrogen; critical minerals.

3. NON-DOMESTIC LPG RESTORED TO PRE-CRISIS LEVELS — Hormuz Aftermath

✓ Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas: Government restored non-domestic packed LPG supplies to pre-Hormuz-crisis levels; all sectoral supply restrictions withdrawn.

✓ Background: Non-domestic LPG (used by hotels, restaurants, hospitals, industrial users) was restricted from April 2026 during the Hormuz crisis — a supply conservation measure when LPG imports (primarily from Qatar, Saudi Arabia) were disrupted.

✓ Restoration: Qatari LNG and LPG supply routes reopened after the Muscat Accord (June 14); LPG tankers have crossed Hormuz; Dahej, Hazira, and Mundra LNG/LPG terminals have received new shipments; combined with domestic LPG production increase (ONGC, RIL), supply has normalized.

✓ Domestic LPG (household cylinders) had been maintained throughout — the restriction was only on non-domestic (bulk, commercial) users; the crisis highlighted India's vulnerability in the commercial energy segment.

✓ GS3 Angle: LPG supply chain; Hormuz economic dividend; energy supply restoration; petroleum sector management.

4. RARE EARTH PERMANENT MAGNET (REPM) SCHEME EXTENDED — Critical Technology

✓ Ministry of Heavy Industries extended the bid submission timeline for the global tender under the REPM (Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnet) Scheme — indicating strong global interest from potential technology partners.

✓ Why REPMs matter: Sintered Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (NdFeB — Neodymium-Iron-Boron and other compositions) are critical components in: EV motors (each EV motor uses 1-2 kg of REPMs); wind turbine generators; defense systems (guided missiles, radar); consumer electronics (hard drives, speakers). India currently imports 100% of its REPM requirements.

✓ The REPM Scheme: Ministry of Heavy Industries' PLI-type scheme to establish domestic REPM manufacturing capability; targets 20,000 tonnes/year of REPM production by 2030; reduces India's near-total import dependence on Chinese REPMs (China controls 90%+ of global REPM production).

✓ Critical mineral link: REPMs require: Neodymium (Nd), Praseodymium (Pr), Dysprosium (Dy) — all Rare Earth Elements (REEs); India has REE deposits in Kerala (Chavara beach sands), Jharkhand, Rajasthan, and Andhra Pradesh; Critical Mineral Mission's REE block auctions directly feed the REPM supply chain.

✓ GS3 Angle: Critical minerals; rare earth elements; REPM; NdFeB magnets; EV supply chain; Atmanirbhar Bharat in advanced materials; China's rare earth dominance.

GS PAPER 1 — Geography · Science

1. Venezuela Doublet Earthquake — 188 Dead; Largest in Venezuela Since 1900

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GS 1 / GS 3: Geography: Earthquake Science; Caribbean-South American Plate Boundary; Strike-Slip Faults; Doublet Earthquakes; Disaster Management: Earthquake Early Warning.

‣ June 24, 2026 (Venezuela, 6 PM local time): Two powerful earthquakes struck northern Venezuela — first a 7.2 magnitude foreshock, then a 7.5 magnitude mainshock just 39 seconds later, near the town of Morón (~100 km west of Caracas).

‣ Death toll as of June 26: 188 dead, 1,520 injured, 157 missing; the coastal state of La Guaira (north of Caracas, between the capital and the Caribbean) declared a disaster zone; buildings collapsed across Caracas, La Guaira, Aragua, Carabobo states.

‣ The 7.5 mainshock is Venezuela's largest earthquake since the 1900 San Narciso earthquake (magnitude 7.7).

‣ USGS PAGER estimate: 39% probability of 1,000-10,000 deaths; 37% probability of 10,000-100,000 deaths (PAGER models based on building stock vulnerability) — the 188 initial count likely to rise significantly.

What Is a 'Doublet' Earthquake?

- Doublet definition (USGS): Two earthquakes of comparable magnitude (both within ~0.5 magnitude of each other) that occur very close in both space (within a few km) and time (within seconds to minutes).

Unlike the typical pattern (large main shock → smaller aftershocks), in a doublet, the 'aftershock' is almost as large as the initial shock.

- Why doublets are more destructive: (1) The first earthquake (7.2) weakens buildings — cracking walls, loosening connections, reducing structural integrity; (2) The second earthquake (7.5), occurring just 39 seconds later, strikes already-damaged structures that can no longer resist seismic forces; the combined effect far exceeds what either earthquake would cause alone. People who survive the first shock and rush outside may be caught in collapsing buildings as the second shock hits.
- Frequency: Doublets are rare (~1-2% of all significant earthquakes); they indicate a complex fault system where one rupture can trigger another on a nearby fault segment almost simultaneously.

Tectonic Setting: Caribbean-South American Boundary

- Venezuela sits along the transpressional boundary between the Caribbean Plate (to the north) and the South American Plate (to the south); the two plates slide past each other horizontally (right-lateral strike-slip) at ~2 cm/year — similar to the San Andreas fault's rate.
- The Boconó–San Sebastián–El Pilar fault system: Venezuela's principal active fault structure, running 1,300 km from the Venezuelan Andes to Trinidad; it's a right-lateral strike-slip fault system that accommodates most of the dextral (rightward) relative motion between the Caribbean and South American plates.
- Strike-slip faulting: The type of faulting in this earthquake — where two blocks of rock slide HORIZONTALLY past each other (not vertically); strike-slip faults can cause intense damage but generally don't create large tsunamis (unlike subduction zone earthquakes which cause vertical displacement). No significant tsunami was generated.

India's Response and Relevance

- PM Modi expressed condolences; India offered humanitarian assistance (NDRF team deployment was discussed); Indian community in Venezuela (~12,000-15,000) was largely safe with minor injuries reported.
- Disaster management relevance: Venezuela had NO earthquake early warning system — unlike Japan (JMA's J-Alert, providing 10-60 seconds warning) or Mexico (SASMEX, 30-120 seconds). An EW system would have allowed some evacuation in the 39 seconds between the two quakes. India is developing its own EW system for seismically active Himalayan regions through NCPOR and IMD.

UPSC ANGLE

• India's seismic zones: India is divided into 5 seismic zones (I-V) per BIS; Zone V (highest risk): Himalayan states, Northeast India, Andaman-Nicobar, Kutch; Zone IV: Delhi, UP foothills, Punjab, Jammu; India's Uttarakhand, Nepal, and Himalayan belt are on the convergent boundary between Indian and Eurasian plates — a subduction zone risk analogous to Venezuela's strike-slip hazard.

• NDMA earthquake preparedness: India's National Earthquake Risk Mitigation Programme (NERMP) under NDMA; National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) deployed post-earthquake; Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOTWS) operated by INCOIS covers tsunamis in the Indian Ocean region.

- **Doublet Earthquake** — Two earthquakes of comparable magnitude occurring very close in space and time; more destructive than a single large earthquake because second shock hits already-damaged structures; rare (~1-2% of significant earthquakes); indicate complex fault geometry.
- **Strike-Slip Fault** — A fault where two blocks of rock slide horizontally past each other; right-lateral = blocks on your right move toward you when facing the fault; the San Andreas (USA), North Anatolian (Turkey), and Boconó (Venezuela) faults are major right-lateral strike-slip systems.
- **Caribbean Plate** — A tectonic plate covering the Caribbean Sea and parts of Central America; moving eastward relative to the North American Plate and South American Plate; its boundary with South America (Venezuela's north coast) is a major seismic zone.

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GS PAPER 2 — Polity · Governance · Health

2. Netra AEW&C Gets Final Operational Clearance — India's 'Eye in the Sky' Is Combat-Ready

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GS 3: Defence: Netra AEW&C; DRDO; CABS; Embraer ERJ-145; AESA radar; Atmanirbhar Bharat; IAF capabilities.

- June 25, 2026: DRDO presented Final Operational Clearance (FOC) for the indigenous Netra (AEW&C — Airborne Early Warning and Control) system to the Indian Air Force at CABS (Centre for Airborne Systems), Bengaluru.
- Netra means 'eye' in Sanskrit — aptly named for an aircraft that serves as the IAF's 'eye in the sky.'
- Platform: Embraer ERJ-145 regional jet (modified by DRDO-CABS); 3 aircraft delivered to IAF; stationed at Bhisiana Air Force Station (No. 200 Squadron, Bathinda, Punjab).
- The FOC follows the IAF's IOC (Initial Operational Clearance) and years of actual operational use — including during Operation Sindoor and the Balakot air strikes.

What Netra Does

- Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C): A Netra aircraft at altitude can detect enemy aircraft, drones, cruise missiles and surface targets from distances that ground-based radars cannot reach (due to Earth's curvature); it extends India's radar 'horizon' by 400-500 km; it also directs friendly fighters to intercept threats and manages the air battle in real-time.
- Key system: Indigenously developed Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar with ~240° azimuthal coverage; Communication, Command, Control and Intelligence (C3I) suite; Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) integration; Electronic Warfare suite (self-protection).
- Comparison with Phalcon AWACS: India also operates the Israeli Phalcon AWACS (on Russian Il-76 aircraft, 3 units) — which provides 360° coverage, longer endurance, and greater detection range; Netra is smaller, cheaper, more flexible, and entirely indigenous; the two systems complement each other.

Development Journey

- The Netra programme began in 2003 as a joint IAF-DRDO project; approved by Cabinet Committee on Security in October 2004; primary development agency: CABS (Centre for Airborne Systems, Bengaluru); contributing labs: LRDE (Electronics and Radar Development Establishment — primary radar), DEAL (communication systems), DARE (self-protection/EW).
- Industry partner: BEL (Bharat Electronics Limited) for production; DRDO-BEL partnership is the standard indigenisation model for complex defence electronics.
- Operation Sindoor 2025 combat use: Netra's AESA radar provided real-time air picture during India's May 2025 strikes on Pakistan — tracking Pakistani Air Force scrambles, detecting radar emissions, and providing battle management data to IAF fighters. Air Marshal Bharti's statement at the FOC ceremony explicitly acknowledged this.

What's Next: Netra Mk-2

- 6 Airbus A321 aircraft (procured from Air India) are being modified for the Netra Mk-2 programme — a much larger and more capable AEW&C system; detection range >500 km; full 360° coverage; improved integration with space-based ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance); expected delivery post-2030.

UPSC ANGLE

• Netra vs. Global AEW&C: US E-3 Sentry (Boeing 707 with 360° AESA radar, range 400+ km); UK E-7 Wedgetail (Boeing 737 with MESA radar); Sweden Saab GlobalEye; China KJ-2000, KJ-500 — Netra Mk-1 is smaller than these, but its indigenous development is what makes it strategically significant.

• CABS Bengaluru: DRDO's specialised lab for airborne systems; has developed multiple surveillance platforms; the Netra FOC is CABS's biggest achievement; it also works on UAV-mounted surveillance systems for Army and Navy.

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- **AEW&C (Airborne Early Warning and Control)** — An aircraft-mounted radar and command system that provides long-range air surveillance, battle management, and data relay; extends radar horizon beyond ground-based limitations; critical for modern air defence.
- **AESA (Active Electronically Scanned Array) radar** — A type of radar where each individual transmit-receive module can be independently controlled; advantages — fast beam steering, multi-target tracking, LPI (Low Probability of Intercept), resistance to jamming; the gold standard for modern radar systems.

3. Mahesh Dixit (IPS 1993 Batch) Named New Director of Intelligence Bureau

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GS 2: Governance: Intelligence Bureau; IB Director; Internal Security; Police Services; UPSC.

‣ The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) approved the appointment of Mahesh Dixit, a 1993-batch IPS officer, as the new Director of Intelligence Bureau (IB).
‣ He succeeds Tapan Deka (1988-batch IPS, Himachal Pradesh cadre), who has served as IB Director since 2021.
‣ Mahesh Dixit: 1993-batch IPS; known for his work in counter-terrorism and internal security; has served in both state police and central deputation including in IB; UP cadre officer.
‣ The IB Director appointment is made by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) — headed by the PM and Home Minister; it is one of the most sensitive appointments in the Indian bureaucracy.

- Intelligence Bureau (IB): India's domestic intelligence agency; one of the world's oldest intelligence agencies (established 1887 under British India); reports to the Ministry of Home Affairs; its primary functions: internal security intelligence (counter-terrorism, LWE, separatism); VIP security assessment; background verification for sensitive appointments; counter-espionage.
- IB vs. RAW: IB = domestic intelligence (internal security); RAW (Research and Analysis Wing) = foreign intelligence; both are India's primary intelligence agencies; IB is under MHA, RAW is under PMO; the IB Director is an IPS officer; RAW chief is typically from IPS or IFS or other civil services.
- Why it matters: The IB Director plays a critical role in: briefing PM and HM on internal security threats; coordinating with state police on counter-terrorism; monitoring extremist groups; providing intelligence for electoral security; the appointment of a new director signals policy priorities.

UPSC ANGLE
• The ACC: The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet approves appointments to: DG Police (state level, on Central deputation), senior IPS posts at Centre, senior IAS posts at Centre, heads of CBI, IB, RAW, NSG, Paramilitary forces, and other sensitive positions. Chaired by PM with HM as member.
• IB and FCRA: The IB plays a role in FCRA enforcement — it provides intelligence on NGOs' funding sources and activities that may affect national security; the recent FCRA amendments connect to IB's oversight functions.

- **IB (Intelligence Bureau)** — India's domestic intelligence agency; established 1887; under MHA; Director is a senior IPS officer; primary functions: counter-terrorism, counter-espionage, LWE monitoring, VIP security, electoral security intelligence.

4. Centre Proposes Committee to Resolve Tri-State River Row — Mahadayi Issue

[TH] Page 3

GS 2: Polity: Inter-State Water Disputes; Article 262; ISWD Act 1956; Mahadayi River; Goa-Karnataka-Maharashtra; Disputes Resolution Committee.

‣ The Central Government proposed constituting a Disputes Resolution Committee (DRC) to resolve the ongoing tri-state river water dispute over the Mahadayi (Mandovi) River between Goa, Karnataka, and Maharashtra.

‣ The Mahadayi dispute: Goa (downstream) vs. Karnataka (wanting to divert water for the Malinadi basin and eventually to Hubli-Dharwad for drinking water) vs. Maharashtra (which also has interests in the Mahadayi basin catchment in the Western Ghats).
‣ Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal (2010): The Mahadayi WDT gave its award in August 2018; Karnataka was allocated 13.42 TMC ft; Goa was allocated 24 TMC ft; Maharashtra 1.33 TMC ft. Karnataka argued it needed more; Goa challenged the award.
‣ The DRC proposal: Under the ISWD Act 2019 Amendment (proposed but lapsed) and the current Act, the Centre can constitute a Disputes Resolution Committee to attempt mediation before approaching the tribunal; the June 2026 proposal is to restart mediation.

The Constitutional and Legal Framework

- Article 262: Parliament may by law provide for the adjudication of any dispute or complaint with respect to the use, distribution, or control of the waters of, or in, any inter-state river or river valley; Parliament may also provide that neither the Supreme Court nor any other court shall exercise jurisdiction in respect of any such dispute.
- Inter-State Water Disputes Act 1956: Governs inter-state river disputes; a state may approach the Centre to constitute a Tribunal; if the Centre believes the dispute cannot be settled through negotiations, it constitutes a Tribunal within 1 year of receiving the complaint; the Tribunal's award is final (like a SC decree).
- Water in the Constitution: Water is a State List subject (Entry 17); the Union comes in only for inter-state rivers and river valleys (Entry 56, Union List); Article 262 specifically bars the Supreme Court's jurisdiction over inter-state water disputes adjudicated by a Tribunal.
- The DRC mechanism (proposed 2019 Amendment, lapsed): Would require a Disputes Resolution Committee (DRC) to attempt amicable resolution within 1 year before a Tribunal is constituted; DRC consists of independent experts; this mediation-first approach is considered faster and less adversarial.

Major Inter-State River Disputes in India

- Cauvery: Karnataka vs. Tamil Nadu vs. Kerala vs. Puducherry; Cauvery WDT (1990-2007); SC modified award (2018); Cauvery Water Management Authority and Cauvery Water Regulation Committee created; ongoing disputes about actual compliance.
- Krishna: Maharashtra vs. Karnataka vs. Andhra Pradesh vs. Telangana; KWD Tribunal I (1969) and II (2004); award given 2010; Telangana joined after bifurcation in 2014; Supreme Court challenge pending.
- Mahadayi: Goa vs. Karnataka vs. Maharashtra; Mahadayi WDT (2010); award 2018; Karnataka allocated 13.42 TMC; Goa 24 TMC; Karnataka argues it needs diversion for Hubli-Dharwad drinking water — a human right vs. ecological flows argument.

UPSC ANGLE
• Mahadayi context: The Mahadayi is known as the 'lifeline of Goa' — it flows through Goa's Western Ghats into the Arabian Sea at Panjim; it's a UNESCO-significant river (part of the Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot); Karnataka's diversion proposal would reduce Goa's dry-season flows.
• Political context: The Mahadayi dispute is politically sensitive because Goa and Karnataka are both currently governed by the BJP — yet they are on opposite sides of the water dispute; the Centre's DRC proposal is seen as an attempt to reduce the BJP-BJP political friction while appearing to resolve the dispute.

- **Article 262** — Parliament may adjudicate inter-state river disputes; AND Parliament may bar the Supreme Court's jurisdiction over such disputes; the Inter-State Water Disputes Act (1956) implements this.
- **Mahadayi River (Mandovi)** — 160 km river originating in Western Ghats (Karnataka) flowing through Goa into the Arabian Sea; Goa calls it 'Mhadei'; the dispute is about Karnataka's diversion proposal for the Malinadi project; Tribunal award (2018) is being challenged.

5. FCRA Rules: A Renewed Attempt to Stifle NGOs — Editorial Analysis

[TH] Page 8

GS 2: Governance: FCRA; Civil Society; Foreign Funding; NGO Regulation; Article 19; Right of Association.

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‣ The Hindu editorial (June 26): The new FCRA Rules amendments signal a 'renewed attempt' by the state to curtail independent civil society; the religious conversion restriction is the most politically charged element.
‣ Numbers: FCRA-registered NGOs fell from 22,000 (2020, when FCRA was amended) to 15,500 (2026) — a 30% decline; with the new reporting requirements, projections suggest another 20% reduction in active FCRA registrations.
‣ The editorial's argument: The cumulative effect of FCRA amendments (2020) + FCRA Rules (2022 + 2026) is a systematic narrowing of India's civil society space — affecting organisations working in healthcare, education, legal aid, and tribal welfare that receive foreign institutional funding (from Ford Foundation, Gates Foundation, Wellcome Trust, etc.).
‣ International reactions: The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Association has twice written to India about FCRA's chilling effect on civil society; India has rejected these communications as interference in domestic affairs.

- Specific organisations affected: Amnesty International India (shut operations in 2020 after FCRA account froze); Greenpeace India (FCRA registration cancelled); Oxfam India (restricted operations); several tribal welfare NGOs in Jharkhand and Odisha (foreign-funded healthcare and legal aid operations disrupted).
- The 'foreign hand' argument: The government's position — that foreign funding creates dependence and potential for foreign influence in India's domestic affairs; this has historical validity (US-funded NGOs in USSR, China-funded NGOs globally — foreign funding IS a genuine influence vector). The question is proportionality — are legitimate welfare NGOs being caught in a net designed for influence operations?
- The SC's Noel Harper judgment (2022): Upheld FCRA 2020 amendments; held that right to receive foreign contributions is NOT a fundamental right; state can regulate in the interest of sovereignty; but the Court also noted that the regulation must not be so excessive as to prevent legitimate humanitarian work.
- Way forward: The editorial recommends: An independent FCRA oversight body (not MHA-controlled) to review cancellations; an expedited appeal process (currently FCRA cancellations can be appealed only in High Courts, which takes years); a transparent distinction between political NGOs and humanitarian/welfare NGOs.

UPSC ANGLE
• FCRA and Article 19(1)(c): Article 19(1)(c) — right to form associations — does NOT include a right to receive foreign contributions (SC in Noel Harper); but the cascading effect of FCRA restrictions can make it impossible for certain civil society forms to function, indirectly impairing the right of association.
• Global context: The V-Dem Institute's Civil Society Score for India has declined sharply since 2018; India ranks among the countries with 'rapidly shrinking' civil society space; the FCRA framework is consistently cited as the primary legal mechanism.

6. Revisiting India's Ultrasound Laws — PCPNDT Act and Sex Ratio

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GS 2: Governance: PCPNDT Act; Sex-Selective Abortion; Child Sex Ratio (CSR); Prenatal Diagnostics; Health Law.

‣ The Hindu analysis: The Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act 1994 (amended 2003) — India's law to prevent sex-selective abortions — is in need of reform to address new reproductive technologies while maintaining its core objective.
‣ Background: India's Child Sex Ratio (CSR, 0-6 years) improved from 918 (2011 Census) to 933 (2021 Census) — showing that awareness and enforcement of PCPNDT has had some effect; but in several states (Haryana 924, Punjab 937, Rajasthan 940), CSR remains below the natural sex ratio (943-950).
‣ Challenges to the Act: (1) Sex determination via blood tests (cell-free fetal DNA — 'NIPT' tests) that can reveal fetal sex as early as 7 weeks of pregnancy are not comprehensively regulated under PCPNDT; (2) Illegal sex determination has moved online (apps, WhatsApp consultations, cross-border services from Nepal/Pakistan); (3) Many enforcement cases are delayed in courts for 10+ years.
‣ New technologies: Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing (NIPT) — a blood test of the pregnant mother — can determine fetal sex with 99% accuracy at 7 weeks; PCPNDT was designed for ultrasound (15-20 weeks); the law's scope needs expansion to cover these newer technologies.

- PCPNDT Act framework: All ultrasound machines must be registered; all ultrasound clinics must maintain records; the sex of the foetus cannot be communicated to anyone; 'PC' (Pre-Conception) covers sex selection before conception (gender selection through embryo selection in IVF); 'PNDT' covers pre-natal sex determination; both are prohibited.
- Penalties: Fine up to Rs 1 lakh + 3 years imprisonment (first offence); Rs 50,000-1 lakh fine + 5 years imprisonment (second offence); license cancellation for clinics; the doctor and the person requesting the test are both criminally liable.
- The reform debate: The article argues for: (a) Expanding PCPNDT's scope to cover NIPT and all fetal genetic testing that can reveal sex; (b) Creating a dedicated PCPNDT enforcement authority (currently the Appropriate Authority system is understaffed); (c) Addressing the root causes (son preference driven by dowry, inheritance, cultural norms) through social reform programmes.

UPSC ANGLE

• Beti Bachao Beti Padhao: Launched 2015 in response to declining CSR; focused initially on 100 worst-performing districts; has contributed to CSR improvement (from 918 to 933 between 2011-2021); BBBB's success is uneven — better in Southern states, still challenging in Northern states.

• NIPUN Bharat and pre-natal diagnostics: As India's health system expands access to reproductive health services, ensuring PCPNDT compliance at last-mile healthcare providers (ASHAs, Sub-Health Centres, PHCs) is increasingly important.

- **PCPNDT Act (1994, amended 2003)** — Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act; prohibits sex selection pre-conception and sex determination post-conception; all ultrasound machines must be registered; sex of foetus cannot be disclosed; penalties up to 5 years imprisonment; needs reform to cover NIPT.
- **NIPT (Non-Invasive Prenatal Testing)** — A blood test of the pregnant mother analysing cell-free fetal DNA circulating in maternal blood; can determine fetal sex with 99% accuracy at 7 weeks; not comprehensively regulated under PCPNDT's current ultrasound-focused framework.

7. '100% Pure' on Front, Disclaimer on Back — CCPA Fines Two Major Brands

[IE] Page Online

GS 2: Governance: Consumer Protection; CCPA; Misleading Advertisements; FSSAI; Food Labelling Regulations.

‣ CCPA (Central Consumer Protection Authority) fined two major food brands — Amul (dairy, butter product) and a leading juice brand — for displaying '100% Pure' or '100% Natural' on the front of pack (FoP) while having disclaimers or qualifications printed in small text on the back.

‣ The violation: Under the Consumer Protection Act 2019, any representation that misleads consumers about a product's quality or composition is an 'unfair trade practice'; printing '100% Pure' on the front while the product contains additives, artificial flavours, or preservatives is misleading.

‣ CCPA's ruling: The '100% Pure' claim without qualification on the FoP is a per se violation of the CPA 2019's prohibition on misleading advertisements; 'disclaimers on the back do not cure misleading claims on the front.'

‣ Fines imposed: Rs 3 lakh fine per brand; additionally, the brands are required to redesign packaging within 60 days; a pattern-of-practice penalty may apply if violations continue.

- CCPA (Central Consumer Protection Authority): Established under the Consumer Protection Act 2019; an executive body under the Department of Consumer Affairs; can: take suo motu cognizance of consumer rights violations; investigate misleading advertisements; impose fines of up to Rs 10 lakh (first offence) and Rs 50 lakh (repeat); recall unsafe goods; ban misleading advertisements; order corrective advertisements.
- The labelling loophole: FSSAI's labelling regulations require accurate ingredient declaration on the full ingredients list (usually back of pack); but they do not explicitly prohibit marketing claims on the front that contradict or simplify the ingredient list. The CCPA's CPA-based action fills this gap.
- India's regulatory gap: Unlike the EU (strict health claims regulation — EC 1924/2006) or the US (FDA's nutrition claims guidance), India lacks comprehensive front-of-pack claim regulations; FSSAI has been

drafting FoP labelling regulations (HFSS warnings) for years — this CCPA action demonstrates that the CPA can be used to regulate misleading claims in the interim.

UPSC ANGLE

• CCPA + FSSAI nexus: The CCPA action under CPA 2019 + FSSAI's pending HFSS FoP labelling regulations together create a comprehensive consumer protection framework for food labelling — but their coordination needs to be formalised.

• Prelims: CCPA = Central Consumer Protection Authority; established under CPA 2019; under Department of Consumer Affairs; regulates misleading advertisements; can fine up to Rs 10 lakh (first offence); can recall unsafe goods.

- **CCPA (Central Consumer Protection Authority)** — Apex consumer protection regulator under CPA 2019; Department of Consumer Affairs; can take suo motu action against misleading advertisements, unfair trade practices; fine up to Rs 10 lakh; order product recalls; issue public warnings.
- **Front-of-Pack (FoP) Claim** — Marketing claims displayed prominently on a product's front ('100% Pure,' '0% Fat,' 'Fortified with Vitamins'); subject to truthfulness requirements under CPA 2019; FSSAI's pending regulations will add mandatory HFSS warning labels.

GS PAPER 3 — Economy · Health · Defence

8. Why States Are Dragging Their Feet on Establishing a Trauma System

[IE] Page Online

GS 2: Health: Trauma Care; Road Accidents; National Trauma Centre; Golden Hour; MCI/NMC; Emergency Medicine.

‣ India has 1.7 lakh road accident deaths annually — the highest globally; road accidents are the primary cause of death in the 15-45 age group (productive years). Yet India lacks a comprehensive national trauma care system.

‣ The 'Golden Hour': For trauma patients (severe injuries), death or permanent disability can be prevented if definitive care is provided within 60 minutes of injury — this is the 'Golden Hour' principle; currently, most Indian trauma patients do NOT reach a facility with trauma capabilities within the golden hour.

‣ The Centre's National Trauma Centre (NTC) plan: MoHFW has been pushing states to establish Level I Trauma Centres (connected to medical college hospitals) in every state capital and large city; however, only 7 states have operationalised Level I Trauma Centres; the majority of states have either not established them or have centres that lack staffing and equipment.

‣ State inertia reasons: High capital cost (Level I trauma centre costs Rs 100-150 crore to establish); shortage of Emergency Medicine specialists (EM is still a relatively new specialty in India — fewer than 5,000 EM specialists in the country); complex administrative coordination between hospitals, police, ambulance services.

- What a Level I Trauma Centre requires: 24x7 availability of surgical teams (trauma surgery, neurosurgery, orthopaedics, vascular surgery); intensive care; CT scanner; blood bank; helipads for air evacuation; a minimum annual caseload to maintain proficiency. These requirements mean only large teaching hospitals can qualify.
- Emergency Medicine as a specialty: The Medical Council of India recognised Emergency Medicine (EM) as a clinical specialty in 2009; but EM residency seats are still limited (fewer than 1,000 seats/year across India); most Emergency Departments in India are staffed by general physicians, not EM specialists.
- The ambulance gap: India has 30,000+ ambulances under EMRI (Emergency Management and Research Institute) — the 108 ambulance service operator; but out-of-hospital trauma stabilisation ('scoop and stabilise') training for ambulance crews is inadequate; most EMRI vehicles are basic life support, not advanced life support.
- PMSBY and cashless trauma care: PM Suraksha Bima Yojana (Rs 2 lakh accidental death + disability insurance for Rs 12/year premium); cashless treatment for road accident victims at empanelled hospitals under Central Motor Vehicles Rules 2022 amendment — but implementation is uneven.

UPSC ANGLE

• National Trauma Policy (Draft, MoHFW): India has a draft National Trauma Policy but it has not been enacted; it would: mandate Level I/II/III trauma centres by catchment population; set ambulance response time standards (8 min in urban, 30 min in rural); require all medical colleges to have EM departments.

• Comparison: USA has 1,100+ Level I Trauma Centres; UK has Major Trauma Centres (MTCs) in every region; India has 30-40 functional Level I equivalent centres — a massive gap for a 1.4 billion population.

- **Golden Hour** — The critical first 60 minutes after a traumatic injury; definitive care within this window dramatically reduces mortality and permanent disability; most Indian trauma patients do not reach adequate care within the golden hour.
- **Level I Trauma Centre** — The highest level of trauma care; must provide comprehensive care for all injuries; requires 24x7 surgical teams, ICU, CT, blood bank; can be a teaching and research centre; currently India has only 30-40 functional Level I equivalent centres.

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9. RBI's New Digital Fraud Compensation Mechanism — What Changes and How to Claim

[IE] Page Online

GS 3: Economy: Banking; Digital Fraud; Consumer Protection; RBI Regulations; UPI; Payment Systems.

▸ RBI announced new Digital Payment Fraud Compensation Rules (effective from January 2027) — creating a mandatory, time-bound compensation mechanism for victims of authorised and unauthorised digital payment fraud.

▸ 'Authorised' fraud (the harder problem): When a victim is tricked into authorising a payment (phishing, vishing, social engineering) — currently the victim bears the loss because they 'consented' to the transaction; the new rules create a conditional liability on banks and payment platforms even in authorised fraud cases, if they fail to deploy prescribed fraud detection measures.

▸ 'Unauthorised' fraud: When a victim's account is hacked without their knowledge; existing RBI circulars already provided for zero/limited liability; the new rules formalise and strengthen this.

▸ Compensation timeline: Banks must acknowledge fraud complaint within 24 hours; provide interim compensation within 72 hours (for unauthorised fraud and high-value authorised fraud cases); final determination within 45 days.

- The 'authorised fraud' revolution: The current position is that if YOU authorised the payment (even under deception), the bank bears no liability; the new rules change this by requiring banks to: deploy AI-based 'mule account' detection; block suspicious cross-border transfers; maintain transaction speed limiters for first-time large transactions; if the bank failed to use these prescribed measures, it shares liability even for authorised fraud.
- Who pays: A two-tier liability system: (1) If the fraud happened due to bank/platform negligence (poor fraud detection, failure to implement prescribed security) — the bank/platform pays; (2) If the fraud happened due to customer negligence (sharing OTP) — customer bears the loss; (3) If fraud happened due to neither's negligence (sophisticated attack) — shared liability (bank pays 50% up to a cap).
- How to claim: File complaint with bank within 30 days; if bank doesn't resolve in 45 days, escalate to RBI Ombudsman (Banking/Digital Payments Ombudsman under Integrated Ombudsman Scheme 2021); if Ombudsman doesn't help, approach Consumer Commission.
- UPI safety: UPI transactions have grown to 18 billion/month in May 2026; UPI fraud is the fastest-growing category; NPCI is deploying AI-based fraud risk scoring in real-time (0.01 second) for all UPI transactions — transactions exceeding a risk threshold are blocked or require additional authentication.

UPSC ANGLE

• RBI's Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (2021): Merged Banking Ombudsman, NBFC Ombudsman, and Digital Payments Ombudsman into one; any unresolved complaint can go to the Ombudsman; no fee for complainant; binding on banks for awards up to Rs 20 lakh.

• The scale of digital fraud: India reported 13 million digital payment fraud cases in FY25 (MHA data); total financial loss ~Rs 11,000 crore; phishing (fake TRAI calls, fake bank calls, OTP harvesting) is the dominant fraud vector.

- **Authorised Fraud (Payment)** — Fraud where the victim is tricked into authorising a payment themselves; different from hacking; currently not covered by bank liability; new RBI rules extend conditional bank liability to authorised fraud if prescribed fraud prevention measures were not deployed.
- **RBI Integrated Ombudsman Scheme (2021)** — Merged Banking + NBFC + Digital Payments Ombudsmen into a single scheme; any financial sector complaint unresolved in 30 days can go to Ombudsman; binding awards up to Rs 20 lakh; no cost to complainant.

10. Corruption at All Levels Takes a Toll on Lives at Construction Sites — Analysis

[TH] Page 8

GS 2: Governance: Corruption; Building Safety; Labour Laws; Occupational Safety; Third-Party Audit.

‣ In the context of the June 22 Lucknow fire (15 student deaths) and other recent construction/building safety disasters, The Hindu analyses the systemic corruption that underlies India's building safety failures.
‣ Pattern of corruption: Building plans are approved without site inspection; NOC (No Objection Certificates) from fire departments, structural engineers, and electricity boards are obtained through bribes without actual compliance; 'completion certificates' are issued for buildings that don't meet safety norms; occupation certificates are granted to buildings that violate approved plans.
‣ The 'invisible workers' problem: India's construction sector employs 65 million workers — the 2nd largest employing sector after agriculture; the majority are informal, unregistered, and without safety equipment; the Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act 1996 mandates safety standards, but enforcement is near-zero.
‣ Chain of accountability: Contractor (cuts corners); engineer (certifies without inspection); local body official (approves corrupt); Structural Auditor (if any — certifies without inspection); Fire Officer (issues NOC against payment); Inspector (doesn't inspect). Every link in the chain is corrupt — and every link means a life can be lost.

- The BOCW (Building and Other Construction Workers) Act 1996: Mandates: Safety committees at construction sites; personal protective equipment (PPE) at employer cost; safety officers for large sites (500+ workers); medical facilities; the BOCW Welfare Fund (funded by a cess of 1% on construction cost) is meant to provide welfare benefits to construction workers. But: The cess collection is widely evaded; welfare funds in many states are unspent; safety compliance is essentially zero in small and medium construction.
- Third-party audit (the solution): Multiple committees have recommended mandatory independent structural audits at: pre-construction stage; mid-construction stage; post-completion before occupation certificate. Only Karnataka has implemented this comprehensively; other states have it on paper but not in practice.
- CBI and ED involvement: Major construction fraud (fake safety certificates, bribery chains) in connection with mass casualty events should trigger CBI/ED investigation under PMLA; the Lucknow fire is being investigated by UP's CBI equivalent (CID); building inspectors and fire officers have been suspended; criminal prosecution needed.

UPSC ANGLE
• RERA and safety: RERA (Real Estate Regulatory Authority) — created under the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act 2016 — covers residential real estate; builders must maintain a structural defect liability for 5 years post-handover; but RERA does not cover commercial buildings, hotels, hostels, or industrial construction where most fatal accidents occur.
• NBO (National Buildings Organisation): Under MoHUA; maintains statistics on construction sector; India has 63 million buildings (Census 2011) + massive new construction annually; NBO's capacity for safety standard enforcement is negligible.

- 📌 **BOCW Act 1996 (Building and Other Construction Workers Act)** — Mandates safety standards for construction workers at large sites; funded by 1% BOCW cess on construction cost; welfare fund for workers; in practice, enforcement is near-zero; inspectors are understaffed and susceptible to corruption.
- 📌 **RERA 2016** — Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act; establishes State RERAs; builders must register projects; 5-year structural defect liability post-handover; complaints mechanism; does NOT cover commercial buildings, hotels, hostels.

PRELIMS IN FOCUS

Venezuela Earthquake + Doublet Earthquakes	Event: June 24, 2026; Two earthquakes — 7.2 (foreshock) + 7.5 (mainshock) — struck northern Venezuela, near Morón, 100 km west of Caracas; 39 seconds apart; 188+ dead, 1,520 injured, 157 missing. Doublet earthquake: Two comparable-magnitude quakes close in space and time; more destructive because 2nd shock hits already-weakened structures. Tectonic setting: Caribbean Plate (north) + South American Plate (south) boundary; right-lateral strike-slip motion at ~2 cm/year. Primary fault: Boconó-San Sebastián-El Pilar fault system, running 1,300 km from Venezuelan Andes to Trinidad. Strike-slip fault: Blocks slide horizontally (no large tsunami generated). La Guaira state: Worst-hit area. Venezuela's first earthquake of this magnitude since 1900 San Narciso earthquake (7.7).
Netra AEW&C — Key Facts	Name: Netra ('Eye' in Sanskrit). Type: Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) system. Developer: DRDO CABS (Centre for Airborne Systems), Bengaluru + LRDE (radar) + DEAL (communications) + DARE (EW). Industry partner: BEL (Bharat Electronics Limited). Platform: Embraer ERJ-145 regional jet (modified). Radar: Indigenous AESA (Active Electronically Scanned Array) — ~240° azimuthal coverage. Units: 3 aircraft; stationed at Bhisiana Air Force Station (No. 200 Squadron), Bathinda, Punjab. Programme approval: Cabinet Committee on Security, October 2004. FOC (Final Operational Clearance): June 25, 2026 at CABS, Bengaluru. IOC was received earlier; IAF inducting Netra operationally before FOC showed high confidence. Used in: Operation Sindoor (2025), Balakot air strikes. Next step: Netra Mk-2 on Airbus A321 platforms (6 aircraft); detection range >500 km; expected post-2030.
Samvidhan Hatya Diwas + Emergency (1975-77)	Emergency proclaimed: June 25, 1975; by PM Indira Gandhi; under Article 352 (national emergency — 'internal disturbance'). Lasted: 21 months (until March 21, 1977). Suspended: Article 19 (freedom of expression, association, movement) — though Articles 20 and 21 were held non-suspendable in Puttaswamy 2017. Key law used: MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act); DIR (Defence and Internal Rules). 42nd Amendment 1976: Added 'socialist, secular, integrity' to Preamble; made constitutional amendments non-justiciable; extended Lok Sabha term to 6 years — most provisions reversed by 44th Amendment. 44th Amendment 1978 (Janata Party): Replaced 'internal disturbance' with 'armed rebellion' as Emergency ground; Articles 20 and 21 cannot be suspended. ADM Jabalpur case (1976 HC): Held Articles 20, 21 suspended during Emergency — overruled by Puttaswamy 2017. Samvidhan Hatya Diwas: Government renamed the day from 'Black Day' in 2023.
PCPNDT Act 1994 (amended 2003)	Full name: Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Act. Objective: Prevent sex-selective abortions; prevent prenatal sex determination. PC part: Prohibits sex selection before conception (IVF/PGD-based sex selection). PNDT part: Prohibits prenatal sex determination (ultrasound, amniocentesis, CVS). Requirements: All ultrasound machines registered; clinics maintain records; sex of foetus cannot be disclosed. Penalties: Up to 3 years + Rs 1 lakh (first offence); up to 5 years (second offence); licence cancellation. Child Sex Ratio (CSR) trend: 2011 = 918; 2021 = 933 (improving but below natural sex ratio of 943-950). Challenge: NIPT (blood test, 7 weeks, 99% accurate for fetal sex) not covered by current Act — needs amendment. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao: Launched 2015 to complement PCPNDT.

Inter-State Water Disputes Act 1956 + Article 262	Article 262: Parliament may adjudicate inter-state river disputes; may bar the Supreme Court's jurisdiction (implemented through ISWD Act 1956). ISWD Act 1956: State requests Centre for Tribunal; if negotiations fail, Tribunal constituted within 1 year; Tribunal's award is FINAL (like SC decree). Major Tribunals and rivers: Cauvery (Karnataka-Tamil Nadu-Kerala-Puducherry); Krishna (Maharashtra-Karnataka-AP-Telangana); Godavari (Maharashtra-AP-Karnataka-Odisha-Madhya Pradesh); Mahadayi/Mandovi (Goa-Karnataka-Maharashtra); Vamsadhara (Odisha-AP); Ravi-Beas (Punjab-Haryana-Rajasthan); Narmada (MP-Gujarat-Maharashtra-Rajasthan). Mahadayi WDT award (2018): Goa = 24 TMC; Karnataka = 13.42 TMC; Maharashtra = 1.33 TMC. DRC (Disputes Resolution Committee): Proposed mediation body before Tribunal — part of 2019 Amendment Bill (lapsed); Centre proposing DRC for Mahadayi in June 2026.

MAPPING — PLACES IN NEWS

Place	Why in News / Key Facts
La Guaira, Venezuela	Worst-hit state in the Venezuela doublet earthquake (June 24, 2026); north of Caracas; Caribbean coastal strip between the capital and the sea; declared 'disaster zone'; hundreds of building collapses; sits directly on the Boconó-San Sebastián fault system.
Morón, Yaracuy State, Venezuela	Near the epicentre of the two earthquakes (7.2 foreshock + 7.5 mainshock); coastal industrial town ~100 km west of Caracas; on Venezuela's Caribbean coast; historically seismically active (previous doublet in September 2025 at 6.2+6.3 magnitude).
Bengaluru (CABS, DRDO)	Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS) — where Netra AEW&C Final Operational Clearance ceremony was held on June 25, 2026; CABS is India's premier airborne systems development lab; also where DRDO's BG Kiran Road DRDO complex is located.
Bhisiana Air Force Station, Punjab	Base of No. 200 Squadron IAF which operates the 3 Netra AEW&C aircraft; near Bathinda, Punjab; strategically located for surveillance of the Pakistan border; also hosts other IAF surveillance platforms.
Mahadayi River, Goa/Karnataka	Tri-state river dispute (Goa-Karnataka-Maharashtra); Mahadayi (also called Mhadei, Mandovi) originates in Karnataka's Western Ghats, flows through Goa into Arabian Sea at Panjim/Panaji; 160 km long; Goa's 'lifeline' river; Karnataka wants to divert water for Hubli-Dharwad drinking water supply (Malinadi project).
Gurugram, Haryana	India hosted 11th BRICS Energy Ministers Meeting here (under India's BRICS 2026 Chairship); Gurugram (formerly Gurgaon) is India's financial and tech hub outside Delhi; home to several MNC headquarters, NTPC and power sector offices.
Boconó Fault, Venezuela	The principal active fault structure of Venezuela; right-lateral strike-slip; runs 1,300 km from the Venezuelan Andes to Trinidad; accommodates dextral (eastward) motion of the Caribbean Plate relative to the South American Plate; the June 2026 doublet occurred along this fault's San Sebastián section.
Panjim (Panaji), Goa	Capital of Goa; on the Mandovi River (= Mahadayi) estuary; the river flows directly past Goa's capital into the Arabian Sea; Karnataka's proposed diversion would reduce the Mandovi's flow through Goa; Goa's water security, tourism (Dudhsagar Falls on a Mandovi tributary), and ecology are at stake.