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Dr. GINDI'S IAS ACADEMY

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Dr. GINDI'S I.A.S. ACADEMY
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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. India's Solar Manufacturing Push: ALMM-II & Implications

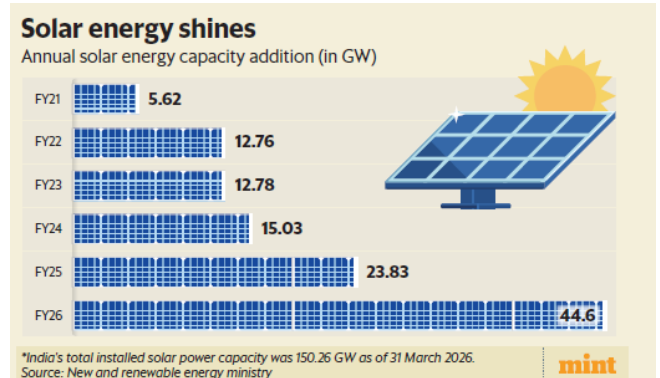
- **New Localization Mandate:** The Approved List of Models and Manufacturers-II (ALMM-II) mandates that grid-scale, government-backed, net-metered, and open-access solar projects commissioned after June 1, 2026, must procure solar cells exclusively from listed domestic manufacturers.
- **Supply-Demand Mismatch:** India possesses ~31 GW of solar cell capacity (27.8 GW under ALMM-II) against ~45 GW of annual solar installations. While integrated players (Adani, Tata, Waaree) are well-positioned, smaller module assemblers face severe supply constraints.
- **Technology Deficit:** Most domestic cell capacity relies on older PERC (Passivated Emitter and Rear Cell) technology, with only 6-7 GW dedicated to high-efficiency Topcon (Tunnel Oxide Passivated Contact) technology, though a shift toward Topcon is accelerating.
- **Cost and Tariff Escalation:** Domestic solar cells cost nearly double ($\approx ₹28$ per watt peak) compared to Chinese imports ($\approx ₹14-14.5$). This cost delta has pushed solar power tariffs up from ₹2–2.4 per unit to ₹3.2 per unit in recent auctions.
- **Future Outlook:** Backed by the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, cell capacity is projected to reach 50 GW in FY27 and 100 GW by late 2027. Upstream components like ingots and wafers face similar ALMM mandates by June 2027.

Key Terms & Frameworks

- **ALMM:** A non-tariff barrier managed by the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE) to ensure quality and domestic value addition in solar components.
- **PERC vs. Topcon:** PERC is an older solar cell architecture using a rear passivation layer. Topcon is an advanced technology utilizing an ultra-thin tunnel oxide layer to reduce electron recombination, yielding higher efficiency.

Constitutional & Legal Provisions

- **Article 48A (DPSPs):** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment.
- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duties):** Mandates citizens to protect the natural environment.



- **International Commitments:** Aligns with India's NDC target under the Paris Agreement to achieve 500 GW of non-fossil fuel capacity by 2030 and Net-Zero by 2070.

Conclusion

The transition to ALMM-II marks a structural shift from import-dependence to strategic autonomy in clean energy. While short-term tariff inflation and supply bottlenecks persist, upstream backward integration is crucial for long-term energy security.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies, energy security, and international trade compliance (WTO domestic content requirement norms).
- **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure, Renewable Energy, Indigenization of Technology, and Climate Change mitigation.

2. India-Nepal Relations: Diplomatic Shift and Border Resolution

- **Diplomatic Realignment:** Nepal's Foreign Minister, Shishir Khanal, emphasized resolving boundary disputes with India through direct diplomacy, rejecting "hypersensitive geopolitical lenses" in favor of economic transformation.
- **Bilateral Exclusivity:** Kathmandu clarified it does not seek third-party mediation (such as the UK or China) regarding the Kalapani-Lipulekh-Limpiyadhura tri-junction, committing firmly to established bilateral channels with New Delhi.
- **Generational Political Shift:** The new Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) government, led by Prime Minister Balendra Shah, intends to shift the narrative from historical border friction toward Development Diplomacy.
- **Economic and Digital Connectivity:** Recent talks highlighted mutual growth, operationalizing peer-to-peer (P2P) cross-border digital payments under an MoU between Nepal Clearing House Limited (NCHL) and NPCI.
- **Trigger for Dispute:** The border issue resurfaced following the resumption of India's Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra through the Lipulekh Pass, a region Nepal claims under its domestic territorial map.

Key Terms & Historical Context

- **Development Diplomacy:** A foreign policy approach prioritizing economic collaboration, cross-border infrastructure, trade, and financial integration over historical or ideological disputes.
- **Treaty of Sugauli (1816):** Signed between the Kingdom of Nepal and British India, establishing the Kali River as Nepal's western boundary. The precise source of the river remains the core point of the contemporary territorial dispute.



Constitutional & Legal Frameworks

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Mandates India to promote international peace, security, and maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
- **1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship:** The bedrock of India-Nepal relations, providing an open border, reciprocal citizenship rights, and deep economic integration.

Conclusion

The new leadership in Kathmandu offers a strategic window for India to institutionalize bilateral border mechanisms. Transitioning from geopolitical friction to development-centric cooperation ensures long-term regional stability and counters external strategic overreach in the Himalayas.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its neighborhood relations, bilateral treaties, institutional mechanisms, and the strategic implications of boundary disputes on regional security.

3. India-EAEU Free Trade Pact: Easing Trade Barriers

- **Accelerated Trade Negotiations:** An Indian delegation is visiting Russia to advance talks on the proposed India-Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) Free Trade Agreement (FTA), following the finalization of the terms of reference.
- **Focus on Non-Tariff Barriers:** The ongoing negotiations primarily target the relaxation of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), which heavily restrict Indian agricultural and marine exports to the Eurasian market.
- **Geopolitical Trade Diversification:** This trade push serves as a strategic maneuver for New Delhi to diversify its export destinations amid protectionist challenges and escalating tariffs imposed by western economies like the United States.
- **Skewed Trade Composition:** While bilateral trade between India and the EAEU reached a record \$69 billion, the volume remains heavily concentrated in Russia—skewed significantly by New Delhi's rising imports of Russian crude oil.
- **Ambitious Growth Targets:** The FTA provides an institutional framework aimed at addressing trade deficits, boosting MSME integration, and steering India-Russia bilateral trade toward the targeted \$100 billion mark by 2030.

Key Terms Defined

- **EAEU:** The Eurasian Economic Union is a five-member economic bloc established in 2015, consisting of Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia, designed to optimize regional economic integration and create a single unified market.
- **SPS Measures:** Domestic regulations applied to protect human, animal, or plant life from risks arising from additives, pests, toxins, or disease-causing organisms in food imports.



Constitutional & Legal Frameworks

- **Article 73:** Confers executive powers on the Union over international relations and the implementation of treaties.

- **Entry 14 (Union List):** Gives Parliament exclusive authority over entering into treaties, agreements, and conventions with foreign nations.
- **WTO Compliance:** Negotiations conform to Article XXIV of GATT, which governs the formation of regional Free Trade Agreements and mandates transparency in non-tariff boundaries.

Conclusion

An India-EAEU FTA holds the potential to unlock vital market access across Central Asia and Eastern Europe. However, its ultimate success relies on India's capacity to negotiate a balanced text that addresses steep non-tariff barriers while narrowing the significant trade deficit.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India, and policies affecting India's diplomatic and economic interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and international trade dynamics.

4. Alternative EV Financing: RDI Scheme Overcomes PLI Exclusion

- **PLI Scheme Barrier:** Strict eligibility thresholds under the ₹25,938 crore PLI Auto scheme—requiring a minimum ₹10,000 crore revenue for automotive firms and ₹1,000 crore net worth for non-auto players—have excluded emerging EV startups like Ather Energy.
- **Pivot to RDI Scheme:** Excluded from manufacturing incentives, Ather Energy is pivoting to the Centre's ₹1 trillion Research, Development, and Innovation (RDI) scheme to secure low-cost, long-term working capital for technical expansion.
- **Concessional Financing Structure:** The RDI scheme replaces traditional short-term commercial debt with milestone-linked, long-term financing at low interest rates (2-3%), covering up to 50% of the approved high-impact project costs.
- **Two-Tiered Implementation Ecosystem:** Operationalized under the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), the scheme routes funds via designated Second-Level Fund Managers (SLFMs) like the Technology Development Board (TDB) and BIRAC.
- **Bridging Commercialization Gaps:** Unlike academic grants, RDI funding prioritizes commercializable deep-tech innovations that have advanced past Technology Readiness Level 4 (TRL-4), driving development in localized EV drivetrains and battery platforms.

Key Terms Defined

- **Patient Capital:** Long-term capital where the investor or lender expects financial returns over an extended period, absorbing high upfront research risks without requiring immediate liquidity.

- **Technology Readiness Level (TRL):** A metric used to assess the maturity of evolving technologies. TRL-4 indicates validated laboratory feasibility, while TRL-9 denotes complete commercial-scale operational deployment.

Constitutional & Legal Frameworks

- **Article 51A(h) (Fundamental Duties):** Mandates citizens and institutions to develop the scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform.
- **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) Act, 2023:** Acts as the apex statutory institutional framework to seed, grow, and direct scientific research and corporate-linked R&D across India.

Conclusion

Ather's pivot from the PLI to the RDI scheme underscores the vital role of patient capital in high-risk deep-tech sectors. For India to successfully transition to sustainable mobility, financial policy must balance large-scale manufacturing subsidies with strategic long-term research backing for domestic innovators.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies, statutory bodies (ANRF), and interventions aimed at boosting core domestic sunrise industries.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy, mobilization of resources, Indigenization of Technology, Infrastructure (EVs), and private sector Gross Expenditure on R&D (GERD).

5. Foreign Corporate Flight and Economic Collapse in Cuba

- **Secondary Sanctions Regime:** In May 2026, the United States issued Executive Order 14404, establishing an unprecedented secondary sanctions framework against Cuba. This regulatory shift forces non-US multinational companies to choose between exiting Cuba or risking total isolation from the US financial system.
- **Targeting Military Conglomerates:** The primary target of the US measures is GAESA, a military-controlled conglomerate controlling at least 40% of the Cuban economy, including key tourism, hospitality, and retail infrastructure operated in partnership with foreign entities.
- **Massive Exodus of Foreign Investors:** Major global brands are liquidating their operations; Spain's Meliá and Iberostar closed down a combined 27 hotels, while financial networks like Mastercard suspended operations on the island due to compliance and infrastructure risks.
- **Critical Minerals Supply Disruption:** Canadian mining giant Sherritt International, co-owner of the strategically vital Moa Nickel S.A. joint venture, suspended direct operations following targeted US sanctions, subsequently entering a preliminary agreement to transfer a controlling 55% stake to US-based Gillon Capital.
- **Macroeconomic Hyperinflation and Paralysis:** Compounded by a severe US oil blockade cutting off subsidized Venezuelan fuel, Cuba's domestic infrastructure has



crippled. The informal exchange rate has collapsed to 620 pesos to the US dollar, causing systemic blackouts and a mass migration crisis.

Key Terms Defined

- **Secondary Sanctions:** Trade and financial restrictions applied by a country against foreign individuals or third-party entities who engage in transactions with a primary sanctioned state, regardless of whether a territorial nexus exists with the sanctioning nation.
- **GAESA:** (Grupo de Administración Empresarial S.A.) The commercial and financial management arm of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces, controlling major domestic industries, port facilities, real estate, and foreign investment ventures.



Constitutional & Legal Frameworks

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Outlines India's commitment to international peace, security, and the respect for international law, framing India's traditional opposition to unilateral extra-territorial sanctions.
- **UN General Assembly Resolutions:** Aligning with India's consistent stance voting alongside the global majority in the United Nations General Assembly against the prolonged unilateral US economic and commercial embargo on Cuba.

Conclusion

The imposition of secondary sanctions marks a qualitative shift toward the economic isolation of Cuba. While designed to force political concessions, the rapid exit of foreign enterprises disrupts global supply chains of critical transition minerals like battery-grade nickel, highlighting the geopolitical vulnerabilities of globalized commerce.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's interests, international sanctions regimes, extra-territoriality of domestic laws, and multilateral diplomacy.
- **GS Paper III:** Global supply chains, critical minerals (Nickel and Cobalt) for the green energy transition, and global macroeconomic vulnerabilities.

6. US H-1B Visa Crackdown: Implications for Indian IT

- **Legislative Pushback:** In 2026, Republican lawmakers introduced four distinct bills—including the American White-Collar Worker Jobs Act and the End H-1B Now Act—seeking to restrict, suspend, or completely eliminate the H-1B visa category.
- **Drastic Reform Measures:** The proposed American White-Collar Worker Jobs Act of 2026 seeks to slash the maximum visa stay from six years to two years, mandate a strict "intent to return" clause, and cap an employer's non-immigrant workforce at 5%.

- **Wage and Legal Deterrents:** The draft legislation forces firms to pay H-1B holders wages higher than 75% of the local population's median income and introduces a federal tort provision allowing displaced US workers to sue outsourcing firms.
- **Alternative Legislative Tracks:** While the EXILE Act aims to terminate the program immediately, other bills propose a 10-year phase-out, a temporary pause on issuance, or restricting annual allocations exclusively to medical professionals.
- **Indian IT Countermeasures:** Indian IT services giants, who secured roughly 11,000 H-1B visas by March 31, 2026, are actively mitigating this regulatory risk by accelerating localized hiring in America and decreasing reliance on overseas transfers.



Key Terms Defined

- **H-1B Visa:** A non-immigrant visa category under the US Immigration and Nationality Act that permits domestic corporations to temporarily employ foreign professionals in specialized occupations requiring theoretical or technical expertise.
- **Cause of Action in Tort:** A legal framework enabling an injured party to initiate a civil lawsuit in federal court to seek financial damages or remedy for a private wrong or displacement.

Constitutional & Legal Frameworks

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles):** Guides the Indian state to foster respect for international law and maintain equitable relationships between sovereign nations, framing India's bilateral mobility dialogues.
- **Emigration Act, 1983:** The primary Indian legislative framework governing and protecting the rights of Indian professionals moving overseas for employment.
- **WTO GATS Mode 4:** Governs the "Presence of Natural Persons." India has long argued that protectionist visa curbs violate the spirit of trade in services negotiated under World Trade Organization frameworks.

Conclusion

The escalating legislative assault on the H-1B system marks a structural shift toward economic nationalism in the US labor market. While this introduces near-term operational hurdles for Indian IT firms, it will likely accelerate their evolution into global, localized consultancy models, reducing systemic vulnerability to foreign domestic politics.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora, and bilateral trade relations.
- **GS Paper III:** Intellectual property rights, service sector exports, and changes in industrial and employment strategies.

7. Strait of Hormuz Crisis: Weaponization of Economic Interdependence

- **Geopolitical Chokepoint Disruption:** Iran's recent closure of the Strait of Hormuz underscores how regional powers can effectively weaponize narrow geographic chokepoints to enforce a global economic slowdown and counter conventional military superiority.
- **Weaponization of Interdependence:** The crisis reflects a structural shift where nations exploit asymmetric dependencies—such as the US utilizing dollar hegemony, China controlling critical rare-earth mineral supply chains, and Iran dominating maritime energy corridors.
- **Diversification Traps:** Unravelling deeply intertwined global supply chains presents massive logistical challenges. Efforts to bypass the strait via pipelines across Saudi Arabia or the UAE face severe capacity limits and vulnerability to regional conflicts.
- **Risks of Alternative Dependencies:** Structural decoupling risks trapping importing nations in new vulnerabilities; for example, Europe's pivot away from Russian energy heightened its reliance on US LNG, while the global renewable energy transition remains heavily dependent on Chinese battery components.
- **Long-Term Policy Reorientation:** Mitigating these structural vulnerabilities requires years of capital-intensive investments, including rebuilding strategic crude oil reserves, expanding nuclear or renewable energy infrastructure, and co-developing alternative trade routes.



Key Terms Defined

- **Weaponization of Interdependence:** The strategic exploitation of centralized nodes within global economic, financial, or physical networks by a state to exert coercive leverage or gather intelligence over dependent adversaries.
- **Asymmetric Economic Warfare:** The use of non-military leverage, such as trade embargoes, supply chain disruptions, or maritime blockade tactics, by a geopolitically weaker state to inflict disproportionate economic damage on a superior military power.

Constitutional & Legal Frameworks

- **Article 51 (DPSPs):** Mandates that India must promote international peace, security, and maintain just and honorable relations between nations, reinforcing its preference for unhindered freedom of navigation.
- **UNCLOS (1982):** The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea guarantees the "Right of Transit Passage" through international straits used for international navigation, establishing the legal framework opposing arbitrary maritime closures.

Conclusion

The Hormuz crisis exposes the fragile underbelly of hyper-globalization. For net energy importers, long-term resilience cannot rely purely on reactive diplomatic ceasefires; it demands proactive energy diversification and the strategic development of alternative, multilateral transit networks.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora, and strategic maritime security.
- **GS Paper III:** Energy security, infrastructure, mobilization of resources, and global supply chain resilience.

8. India-US Trade Friction: Section 301 and Bilateral Negotiations

- **Proposed Section 301 Tariffs:** The US Trade Representative (USTR) has proposed a 12.5% tariff on imports from 54 nations, including India and China. The action follows a Section 301 probe concluding these countries failed to restrict imports of goods produced using forced labor in third-party nations.
- **Scope of the Investigation:** The investigation does not target India for utilizing forced labor within its borders. Instead, it addresses India's lack of a strict legal prohibition on importing raw materials or intermediate inputs from third nations (such as China) where forced labor is prevalent.
- **Strategic Pressure Tactic:** Trade experts view the tariff proposal as an executive pressure tactic to extract concessions. It comes while New Delhi and Washington negotiate the first tranche of an interim bilateral trade agreement (BTA) targeted for execution by mid-July 2026.
- **Preferential Access Dynamics:** Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal downplayed the threat, emphasizing that India's focus remains on "preferential access." As long as India's regional competitors face similar or higher tariff brackets, Indian export competitiveness remains insulated.
- **Impact on Labor-Intensive Sectors:** If finalized, the cumulative duties could impact price-sensitive export sectors, including textiles, apparel, leather, carpets, and engineering goods, potentially eroding some tariff advantages secured via the parallel trade pact.



Key Terms Defined

- **Section 301 (US Trade Act of 1974):** A statutory provision granting the USTR sweeping authority to investigate and unilaterally respond to foreign trade practices deemed unreasonable, discriminatory, or burdensome to US commerce.
- **Forced Labor Transshipment:** The economic practice where goods or inputs produced via forced labor in one country are exported to a secondary country for processing before final shipment to the destination market, circumventing direct import bans.

Constitutional & Legal Frameworks

- **Article 23 (Indian Constitution):** Explicitly prohibits traffic in human beings and *begar* (forced labor), making any form of forced labor an enforceable constitutional offense inside India.

- **WTO Bound Rates:** Tariffs applied beyond agreed commitments violate General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) provisions. Unilateral non-tariff or tariff measures can be legally contested under the World Trade Organization's dispute settlement mechanism.

Conclusion

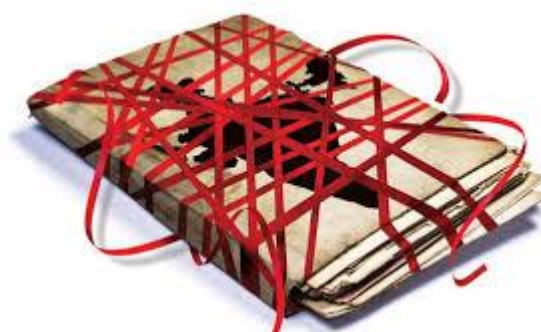
The Section 301 investigation highlights the growing intersection of labor standards, supply chain transparency, and international trade. While India must carefully negotiate to safeguard its export sector from extra-territorial laws, diversifying supply chains away from high-risk geopolitical zones will be key to long-term market access.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's interests, bilateral trade agreements, and global trade governance.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy, export competitiveness, changes in industrial policy, and supply chain indigenization.

9. Corruption in Afforestation Schemes: Institutional Red Tape and Accountability

- **Delayed Vigilance Action:** The Rajasthan Forest Department has delayed initiating an Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) probe for over 15 months, despite an internal enquiry report explicitly exposing systemic embezzlement in state-funded plantation works.
- **Modus Operandi of Financial Fraud:** The initial 2025 investigation uncovered extensive administrative irregularities, including the production of forged bills, fabricated plantation field records, fake signatures, and illicit institutional money transfers.
- **Siphoning of Public Funds:** The core of the financial graft involves an illegal withdrawal of ₹17 crore earmarked for advance soil conservation and moisture work during 2023-24 across a single forest range located within the Alwar division.
- **Dilution via Bureaucratic Delays:** Accountability mechanisms are being diluted through successive oversight loops. A secondary administrative report attempted to downplay the fraud by arguing that transactions occurred via bank transfers rather than cash, stalling the final ACB referral.
- **Large Financial Stakes:** This localized vulnerability points to a deeper systemic risk across the state, given that Rajasthan expends an estimated ₹600-800 crore annually on greening and afforestation schemes managed by local committees.



Key Terms Defined

- **Village Forest Protection and Management Committees (VFPMCs):** Joint forest management bodies composed of local village stakeholders and forest officials, tasked with

implementing, monitoring, and protecting decentralized afforestation and soil conservation works.

- **Administrative Vigilance:** The internal institutional framework within public departments designed to ensure integrity, prevent corruption, and enforce disciplinary or legal action against administrative malpractice.

Constitutional & Legal Frameworks

- **Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA), 1988:** The primary statutory law penalizing public servants involved in financial graft, criminal misconduct, or the embezzlement of government funds.
- **Article 48A (DPSPs):** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests, making the efficient, transparent utilization of environmental funds a core governance duty.
- **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act, 2006:** Empowers local community institutions in forest management, highlighting the need for transparent financial devolution down to grassroots environmental bodies.

Conclusion

The institutional delay in investigating the Rajasthan plantation fraud demonstrates how bureaucratic red tape can shield internal corruption and undermine green governance. To ensure that massive financial allocations for climate mitigation yield genuine ecological results, India must mandate independent social audits and strictly time-bound vigilance referrals.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Accountability and ethics in governance, role of civil services in a democracy, and the structural institutional challenges plaguing anti-corruption bodies.
- **GS Paper III:** Environmental conservation, degradation, and the transparent financing of climate resilience and afforestation programs.
- **GS Paper IV:** Administrative integrity, professional ethics, public service values, and combatting corruption in state machinery.

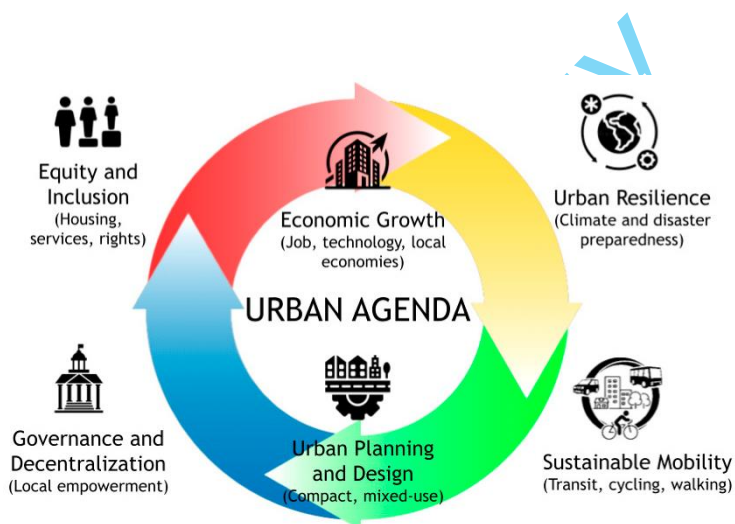
10. Urban Governance vs. Executive Excess: The HYDRAA Contours

- **Genesis of HYDRAA:** The Hyderabad Disaster Response and Asset Protection Agency (HYDRAA) was constituted by the Telangana government via executive order to safeguard public properties, mitigate urban flooding, and manage localized ecological disasters.
- **Political Rhetoric and Backlash:** Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy sparked constitutional debates by publicly drawing parallels between the naming/operational logic of HYDRAA and historical enforcement mechanisms, drawing severe criticism from opposition factions who flagged it as a "dictatorial" or "Emergency" mindset.
- **Core Institutional Triad:** Functioning under the Municipal Administration and Urban Development Department, HYDRAA operates through three distinct functional wings: Asset Protection (reclaiming public lands), Disaster Management (Disaster Response Force), and Logistical Support.

- **Statutory Transition:** Initially vulnerable to legal challenges for lacking legislative backing, the agency was granted formal legal sanctity via the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Ordinance, which inserted Section 374B to institutionalize its enforcement powers.
- **Judicial Scrutiny:** Despite statutory backing, HYDRAA faces intense oversight from the Telangana High Court, which has reprimanded the agency for carrying out overnight demolitions without serving notice, ordering property restoration to protect the Rule of Law.

Key Terms Defined

- **HYDRAA:** A specialized executive and statutory agency tasked with planning, coordinating, and executing preventive measures against urban disasters, while actively removing illegal encroachments across the Telangana Core Urban Region (TCUR).
- **Rule of Law:** A fundamental legal principle specifying that all government actions must strictly adhere to pre-established legal procedures and statutory provisions, protecting citizens against arbitrary executive overreach or dispossession.



Constitutional & Legal Frameworks

- **Article 21:** Guarantees the Right to Life and Livelihood. The judiciary reads this article alongside the "Due Process of Law" to restrain arbitrary, unnotified state demolition drives.
- **Article 300A:** Explicitly protects the Right to Property, mandating that no individual shall be deprived of their property save by authority of law.
- **74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992:** Devolution of urban planning and asset management functions to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). HYDRAA's parallel regulatory interventions must structurally align with, rather than bypass, these constitutional third-tier bodies.

Conclusion

HYDRAA represents a major shift toward assertive urban environmental governance. However, while the reclamation of water bodies and flood prevention are vital public goals, the state must balance executive actions with due process and judicial safeguards to ensure that public asset protection does not undermine constitutional rights.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Statutory, regulatory, and various quasi-judicial bodies; mechanisms, laws, and institutions constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.
- **GS Paper IV:** Administrative ethics, balancing public interest with civil rights, and accountability in executive enforcement.

11. Prehistoric Discoveries in the Aravallis: Cultural Continuity and Lithic Evolution

- **Major Archaeological Breakthrough:** A wildlife trail through the Bhondsi stretch of the Aravalli forests in Gurgaon, Haryana, has exposed a major prehistoric site containing cup-shaped depressions (cupules), geometric grids, rock art, and large foot-shaped petroglyphs.
- **Evidence of Chronological Continuity:** The site displays an exceptionally rare continuity of human habitation and evolution, with physical artifacts and lithic technology spanning seamlessly across the Lower Palaeolithic, Middle Palaeolithic, and Mesolithic phases.
- **Evolution of Stone Tool Traditions:** Discoveries include Lower Palaeolithic Acheulean bifacial handaxes and cleavers fashioned from local quartzite, transitioning into smaller, refined flake tools characteristic of Middle Palaeolithic assemblages (300,000 to 50,000 years ago).
- **Cognitive Shift and Symbolic Life:** The presence of non-utilitarian cupules and geometric carvings points directly to an early cognitive shift. It indicates that prehistoric communities developed complex symbolic rituals, social structures, and game-board-like pastimes during later phases like the Mesolithic period.
- **Conservation Vulnerabilities:** While teams from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and the Haryana Archaeology Department are documenting the petroglyphs, researchers have flagged immediate preservation threats from active land mafias, highlighting the need for legal protection.



Key Terms Defined

- **Petroglyph:** Images, symbols, or artistic designs created by carving, engraving, incising, or scraping directly into a natural rock surface.
- **Acheulean:** An advanced Lower Palaeolithic stone-tool culture characterized by distinctive oval and pear-shaped bifacial handaxes, associated early on with Homo erectus.
- **Cupule:** A hemisphere-shaped, non-utilitarian depression carefully pecked or carved into a rock surface, representing some of humanity's oldest surviving forms of rock art.

Constitutional & Legislative Frameworks

- **Article 49 (DPSPs):** Mandates that the State must protect monuments, places, and objects of artistic or historic interest declared to be of national importance.
- **Article 51A(f) (Fundamental Duties):** Obligates every Indian citizen to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture.
- **Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (AMASR) Act, 1958:** Provides the statutory backing for the ASI to declare, acquire, and protect newly discovered prehistoric landscapes.

Conclusion

The Bhondsi discovery transforms our understanding of early human settlement in North India. Preserving this uninterrupted evolutionary timeline within the rapidly urbanizing NCR requires declaring the Aravalli pockets as protected archaeological zones to insulate them from commercial encroachment.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I:** Indian Culture, Salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature, and Architecture from ancient to modern times; Prehistoric stone age sites (Palaeolithic to Mesolithic) and early human evolution in the Indian subcontinent.

12. SC Strength Expansion via Ordinance: Judicial Independence Issues

- **Unprecedented Strength Expansion:** Following the May 2026 Presidential Ordinance lifting the Supreme Court's sanctioned judge strength from 34 to 38, five new judges were sworn in. While two filled regular vacancies, three were appointed to posts existing solely because of the Ordinance.
- **Threat to Judicial Autonomy:** Article 124(1) leaves the determination of Supreme Court strength to Parliament. Appointing judges to temporary offices created via a temporary executive Ordinance compromises the basic structural tenet that the judiciary must remain unguided by obligation to the executive.
- **Contradiction of Legal Precedents:** Accepting appointments to Ordinance-created posts clashes with the Court's own historical jurisprudence. Landmark rulings like *D.C. Wadhwa (1986)* and *Krishna Kumar Singh (2017)* strictly held that executive ordinances cannot act as a parallel source of lawmaking.
- **NJAC Core Principles Bypassed:** In the 2015 *NJAC Case*, a Constitution Bench struck down the 99th Amendment to safeguard judicial primacy in appointments against executive influence. Critics argue that accepting temporary positions holding office at the executive's legislative sufferance dilutes that very protection.
- **The Post-Lapse Legal Anomaly:** If Parliament fails to replace the Ordinance within six weeks of reassembling, the sanctioned strength reverts to 34. This leaves the junior-most judges holding offices no longer legally recognized, placing their tenure security in a precarious structural spot.
- **De Facto Protection and Perceptions:** While the *de facto doctrine* (*Gokaraju Rangaraju, 1981*) protects past rulings made by an affected judge, the subtler harm is to public perception. A judge whose continuation depends on the executive regularizing their seat faces structural hurdles in displaying visible detachment.

Key Terms & Legal Principles

- **Ordinance-Making Power:** Power under Article 123 enabling the President to legislate on the Cabinet's advice when Parliament is not in session. It is an exceptional mechanism, not a permanent substitute for standard legislative process.
- **De Facto Doctrine:** A legal rule validating administrative or judicial acts performed by an official carrying out duties under a defective or later invalidated title, protecting institutional continuity and public interest.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 124(1):** Expressly vests the power to alter the Supreme Court's numerical composition in Parliament through legislative amendment.
- **Basic Structure Doctrine:** Establishes that the independence of the judiciary is an unalterable core of the Constitution that cannot be compromised by either executive or legislative maneuvers.

Conclusion

Expanding the bench via an executive shortcut to curb pendency compromises critical safeguards surrounding the security of tenure. To prevent the appearance of political obligation, structural modifications to the apex court must follow regular legislative debate inside Parliament rather than temporary executive decrees.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Separation of powers between organs, executive-judicial friction, appointment to various constitutional posts, and the preservation of judicial independence.

