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Civils & Competitive Careers
TRANSFORMING ASPIRANTS INTO ACHIEVERS

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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. Global Supply Crunch Triggers Surge in India's Fertiliser Subsidy Burden

- **Subsidy Surge Amid Global Crisis:** India's fertiliser subsidy burden is projected to double to nearly **Rs 3.4 lakh crore** against the Budget Estimate (BE) of Rs 1.7 lakh crore. This fiscal strain is driven by skyrocketing global costs resulting from severe logistical disruptions, including a near-closure of the **Strait of Hormuz** due to regional conflict and subsequent naval blockades.
- **Supply Chain and Logistical Bottlenecks:** The West Asia crisis has triggered severe port congestion on India's western seaboard. Exporters face soaring freight costs, "opportunistic pricing" by foreign shipping lines, and non-transparent impositions of **demurrage and detention charges**, severely impacting trade margins.
- **Government Mitigation and Domestic Strategy:** To counter the international supply crunch and maintain affordable domestic prices, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) are floating import tenders. Simultaneously, the government plans to diversify import channels by tapping **Russia** while aggressively ramping up domestic fertiliser production.
- **Mechanism of Subsidy Disbursal:** Fertilisers are sold to farmers at subsidized, government-fixed Maximum Retail Prices (MRP). The Union Government bridges the gap between the higher cost of production/import and the lower market retail price by paying the difference directly to fertiliser manufacturers.

- **Key Economic and Legal Definitions:** *

Demurrage: Fine levied by a shipping line when cargo containers remain inside the port terminal beyond the allowed free time.

- **Detention Charges:** Fee charged for holding empty containers outside the port terminal past the agreed duration.
- **Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS):** A scheme administered since 2010 where a fixed amount of subsidy is decided on an annual basis for each nutrient (N, P, K, S) present in non-urea fertilisers.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 112 (Annual Financial Statement):** The dramatic expansion of the subsidy from Rs 1.7 lakh crore to Rs 3.4 lakh crore requires parliament-approved supplementary demands for grants, highlighting fiscal deviation from the original budget estimates.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Fertilisers are declared as essential commodities under this Act. The government utilizes the **Fertiliser Control Order (FCO), 1985** to regulate the price, distribution, and quality of fertilisers across the country.
- **Article 39(b) of Directive Principles (DPSP):** Directs state policy toward ensuring that ownership and control of material resources are distributed to best subserve the common good, justifying massive agricultural subsidies to secure food production.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

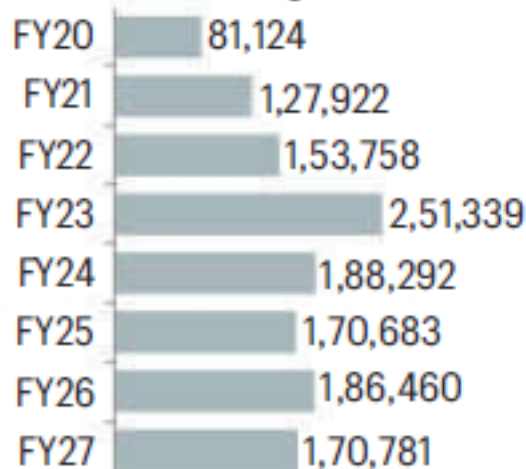
The escalating subsidy bill underscores India's vulnerability to global geopolitical choke points and volatile commodity markets. Balancing the fiscal deficit target while shielding domestic agriculture remains a critical macroeconomic challenge. For the UPSC Civil Services Exam, this issue is highly relevant under **GS Paper II (Geopolitics and Global Choke Points)** and **GS Paper III (Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies, Fiscal Policy, and Supply Chain Management)**.

2. India's Macroeconomic Trajectory: Growth Momentum Amid Emerging Structural Headwinds

- **GDP Growth Acceleration and Key Drivers:** India's real GDP growth surged to a 12-quarter high of 7.7% in Q4 FY26, outperforming initial market expectations. Growth was primarily driven by a resilient services sector (accelerating to 9.6% in Q4 via trade, hotels, and transport) and a sharp rebound in agriculture to 3.6% from 1.7% in the previous quarter, which successfully offset a significant moderation in industrial production and manufacturing (slowing to 7.3% from 12.8%).

• Fertiliser subsidy

Figures in Rs crore



FY26 IS REVISED ESTIMATE, FY27 BUDGET ESTIMATE; SOURCE: BUDGET DOCUMENTS

- **Divergence in Capital Formation and Consumption:** Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF) expanded robustly by 10.8% year-on-year in Q4, signaling strong private sector investment momentum that offset a 23.3% contraction in central government capital expenditure (capex) aimed at meeting fiscal deficit targets. Conversely, Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE) moderated to 7.1%, representing its lowest pace in four quarters due to higher living costs and inflationary pressures.
- **External Trade Realities and Choke Points:** Net exports as a share of GDP improved to -1.4% in Q4 from -2.7% in Q3, buoyed by strong services exports and a temporary decline in energy imports from West Asia. However, full-year net exports deteriorated to -2.2% of GDP in FY26 due to tariff-related risks and geopolitical war-related disruptions, emphasizing India's structural vulnerability to rising global shipping, commodity, and insurance costs.
- **Monsoon Vulnerability and Inflationary Risks:** The India Meteorological Department (IMD) projects FY27 rainfall at 90% of the Long Period Average (LPA), signaling a high risk of a below-normal monsoon. Historical data shows that a rainfall deficiency of 10% or more stagnation-aligns agricultural growth near zero, threatening farm output, rural demand, and escalating food inflation, leading the RBI to project a lower GDP growth of 6.3% for FY27.
- **Key Economic Definitions:**
 - * **Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF):** A macroeconomic metric representing the net increase in physical assets (infrastructure, machinery, equipment) within an economy during an accounting period, serving as a proxy for investment.
 - **Gross Value Added (GVA):** An economic productivity metric that measures the contribution of a corporate subsidiary, company, or municipality to an economy, sector, or region ($GVA = GDP + \text{Subsidies on products} - \text{Taxes on products}$).
 - **Nominal-Real GDP Gap:** The divergence between nominal growth (valued at current market prices) and real growth (inflation-adjusted), where a wider gap directly indicates rising wholesale and retail inflation across goods-producing sectors.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 112 (Fiscal Responsibility):** The moderation in central capex highlights the executive's enforcement of fiscal consolidation pathways to adhere to parliamentary fiscal deficit mandates.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003:** The contraction in government expenditure during the second half of the fiscal year reflects statutory compliance to reduce the fiscal deficit relative to GDP.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Provides the statutory framework for state interventions, crop insurance implementation (Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana), and financial relief distribution through the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) in the event of severe monsoon deficits.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

While FY26 concluded on an impressive growth trajectory, systemic speed bumps including softening private consumption, global supply chain shocks, and impending monsoon deficiencies present downside risks for FY27. This topic holds critical relevance for the UPSC Civil Services Examination under **GS Paper III (Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country)** and **GS Paper I (Important Geophysical phenomena - Monsoons)**.

3. Pharmaceutical Innovation: Oral GLP-1 Receptor Agonists and India's Diabetes Challenge

- **Breakthrough in Non-Invasive Therapeutics:** Clinical trials published in *The Lancet* for **elecoglipron**, an experimental once-daily oral small-molecule drug, demonstrate significant efficacy in lowering blood glucose and aiding weight loss. This marks a vital paradigm shift from traditional **GLP-1 receptor agonists** (e.g., semaglutide, liraglutide), which are predominantly administered via subcutaneous injections with strict fasting requirements.
- **Clinical Trial Outcomes (SOLSTICE Phase 2b):** The multi-country randomized clinical trial sponsored by AstraZeneca showed that up to 89.6% of participants achieved an **HbA1c level below 7%** (the standard medical target). Furthermore, up to 72.3% of treated patients achieved at least a 5% reduction in overall body weight, presenting a dose-dependent, clinically meaningful therapy for both diabetic and non-diabetic obese populations.
- **Relevance to the Indian "Thin-Fat" Phenotype:** India is home to over 100 million diabetic individuals who frequently develop Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus (T2DM) at lower Body Mass Index (BMI) thresholds than Western cohorts. This is driven by the unique South Asian "thin-fat" phenotype—characterized by higher visceral fat, lower muscle mass, and severe insulin resistance despite a relatively lean external appearance—making concurrent blood sugar and visceral fat regulation critical.
- **Patient Compliance and Structural Advantages:** Unlike early-generation oral semaglutide formulations that require strict, empty-stomach administration with water restrictions, elecoglipron can be taken without food or fluid limitations. This flexibility eliminates major behavioral adherence barriers, though mild-to-moderate gastrointestinal side effects (nausea, vomiting, altered bowel habits) remain consistent with the GLP-1 drug class.
- **Key Scientific Definitions:**
 - * **GLP-1 (Glucagon-Like Peptide-1):** An incretin gut hormone that stimulates glucose-dependent insulin secretion, inhibits glucagon release, delays gastric emptying, and induces central satiety to regulate appetite.
 - **HbA1c (Glycated Haemoglobin):** A key diagnostic biomarker that measures the average percentage of blood glucose bound to hemoglobin over the preceding 2 to 3 months.



- **Phase 3 Clinical Trials:** Large-scale multicenter trials on expanded patient populations designed to definitively confirm safety, tolerability, optimal efficacy, and preservation of lean muscle mass before structural regulatory approval.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 47 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Obligates the State to regard the raising of the level of nutrition, the standard of living, and the improvement of public health as among its primary duties, driving policies against non-communicable disease (NCD) epidemics.
- **National Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) Cell:** Functioning under the **National Health Mission (NHM)**, this framework supports institutional screening, early diagnosis, and management of metabolic disorders like diabetes and hypertension across India.
- **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940:** Regulates the import, manufacture, and distribution of drugs in India. Any breakthrough molecule like elecglipton must clear rigorous clinical data reviews by the **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)** before local market commercialization.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The development of flexible, non-invasive oral GLP-1 therapies holds transformative potential to mitigate India's escalating public health burden from metabolic syndromes. This development is highly relevant to the UPSC Civil Services Examination under **GS Paper II (Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health)** and **GS Paper III (Science and Technology- Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; Biotechnology and pharmaceutical innovations).**

4. Enhancing Fiscal Viability: Government Reforms for Jan Aushadhi Kendras

- **Structural Reforms for Financial Viability:** The Union Government is formulating a comprehensive plan to make business operations at Jan Aushadhi Kendras self-sustaining and commercially attractive for retailers. Because generic medicines are low-priced compared to branded alternatives, standard percentage margins often fail to cover fixed operational costs. To rectify this, the government intends to gradually scale up product margins for retailers to up to 50%.
- **Altering Incentive Structures and Inventory Buffers:** To prevent stock-outs and support store operators, the Department of Pharmaceuticals plans to revamp the baseline retail incentive structure. Crucially, the government intends to absorb the financial losses incurred due to expired inventory, which previously acted as a severe financial drain on individual shop owners, thereby encouraging them to maintain full, uninterrupted inventories of vital medicines and medical consumables.
- **Easing Working Capital through Credit Extension:** To alleviate severe cash-flow constraints, the credit cycle is being systematically restructured. The Pharmaceuticals &



Medical Devices Bureau of India (PMBI) will provide an extended credit window of 90 days to distributors for making payments. Consequently, distributors will pass on a 75-day credit period to Jan Aushadhi Kendra owners (up from the existing 45-day limit), significantly reducing their immediate working capital requirements.

- **Core Institutional Framework of PMBJP:** The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) is a flagship campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers. Its core mandate is to provide quality generic medicines—equivalent in therapeutic efficacy but significantly lower in cost than branded drugs—to the public, thereby drastically lowering out-of-pocket health expenditure.
- **Key Healthcare and Economic Definitions:**
 - * **Generic Medicines:** Drugs that contain the exact same active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) as branded formulations, matching them in dosage, safety, strength, quality, and performance, but sold under their chemical names without trademark protection.
 - **Working Capital:** A financial metric representing the operating liquidity available to a business for its day-to-day operations, calculated as current assets minus current liabilities.
 - **Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE):** The direct payment made by individuals to healthcare providers at the time of service, bypassing insurance or social security frameworks, which constitutes a major driver of poverty in developing nations.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 21 (Right to Life and Health):** The Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed that the right to health and access to affordable, life-saving medicines is an integral facet of the right to live with human dignity under Article 21.
- **Article 38 and Article 39(e) (Directive Principles):** Mandate the State to secure a social order that promotes the welfare of the people and minimizes socio-economic inequalities, while ensuring that the health and strength of workers are not abused due to economic necessity.
- **National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA):** While PMBJP provides low-cost generics structurally, the NPPA functions as an independent regulatory body under the same Ministry to fix and regulate the prices of scheduled formulations under the **Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO), 2013**.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

Strengthening the retail economics of Jan Aushadhi Kendras ensures the long-term survival of affordable healthcare delivery networks across India. By reducing operational risks for micro-entrepreneurs, the state effectively secures universal access to essential pharmaceuticals. This development holds immense structural relevance for the UPSC Civil Services Examination under **GS Paper II (Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health and welfare schemes for vulnerable sections)** and **GS Paper III (Indian Economy, mobilization of resources, and small business entrepreneurship)**.

5. Primacy of Statutory Law: IBC Provisions Overrule Supreme Court Rules, Affirms SC

- **Primacy of Parliamentary Statute over Procedural Rules:** The Supreme Court (SC) ruled that in case of any direct conflict between the provisions of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and the Supreme Court Rules (SCR), the IBC will prevail. A bench of Justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma clarified that the SCR is a form of subordinate legislation and cannot undermine or dilute the strict statutory timelines mandated by Parliament.
- **IBC as a Self-Contained Legal Framework:** The apex court re-emphasized that the IBC is a "complete code in itself." Consequently, litigants cannot bypass or subvert the strict limitation regime governing insolvency appeals by deliberately filing defective applications to manipulate timelines and later attempting to cure those defects at their own convenience.
- **Defective Appeals and the Extinguishment of Rights:** The court established that under Section 62 of the IBC, an appeal must be filed in a defect-free, proper format to be recognized as legally instituted. Once the core statutory period of 45 days for filing an appeal, along with the conditional 15-day condonable extension, is exhausted, any subsequent right to appeal stands permanently extinguished, overriding the more flexible re-filing timelines found under standard civil or criminal procedural rules.
- **Refusal to Invoke Extraordinary Constitutional Powers:** The bench declined to invoke its extraordinary jurisdiction under Article 142 of the Constitution to condone delays, despite the appellant being a court-appointed liquidator acting in the interest of stakeholders. The court held that judicial officers cannot be granted preferential relaxation unless explicitly provided by Parliament within the statute itself.
- **Key Economic and Legal Definitions:**
 - * **Complete Code in Itself:** A legal term for a comprehensive statute that exhaustively governs a specific subject matter, intentionally excluding the application of general procedural or limitation laws.
 - **Condonation of Delay:** A discretionary judicial power allowing courts to overlook a litigant's failure to adhere to statutory timelines if a legally sufficient and bona fide cause for the delay is established.
 - **Subordinate Legislation:** Rules, regulations, or bylaws framed by an executive body, judiciary, or administrative authority under the powers delegated to them by a primary parliamentary act.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 142 of the Constitution:** Grants the Supreme Court the extraordinary power to pass any decree or order necessary for doing "complete justice" in any cause or matter pending before it. This ruling confirms that Article 142 cannot be used to subvert express statutory mandates.

- **Section 62 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016:** Governs the statutory procedure for filing an appeal directly to the Supreme Court from an order passed by the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), stipulating rigid, non-negotiable timelines.
- **Article 145 of the Constitution:** Empowers the Supreme Court, with the approval of the President, to make rules for regulating the general practice and procedure of the court (the statutory basis for the Supreme Court Rules).

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

This landmark judgment secures the core economic legislative intent of the IBC—ensuring time-bound resolution and preservation of asset values—by blocking procedural loopholes. It reinforces the constitutional principle that delegated legislation must yield to parent parliamentary statutes. For the UPSC Civil Services Examination, this development is highly significant under **GS Paper II (Structure, organization, and functioning of the Judiciary; Statutory and regulatory bodies)** and **GS Paper III (Indian Economy, corporate governance, and insolvency resolution mechanisms)**.

6. Global Benchmarking: Government to Expand World Class Institutions Scheme in FY27

- **Expansion of World Class Institutions Scheme:** The Department of Expenditure (DoE), Ministry of Finance, has directed the Ministry of Education to select four new private universities under the World Class Institutions (WCI) scheme for the FY27 academic cycle. This systematic push aims to expand India's domestic cluster of globally competitive higher education centers while balancing the dual objectives of academic affordability and high-quality access.
- **Targeted Global Ranking Benchmarks:** The executive mandate tasks the education ministry with ensuring that six new domestic institutions successfully enter the top 500 tier of prominent international assessment metrics. These target indicators include the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, QS World University Rankings, and the Shanghai Jiao Tong University's Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU).
- **Fiscal Allocation and Institutional Architecture:** The WCI framework—initially launched in 2017—has been granted a dedicated fiscal outlay of **Rs 900 crore** for FY27. The project currently spans 12 recognized Institutions of Eminence (IoEs), which are split into an operational ratio of eight public and four private institutions. Under the governing model, public entities receive matching state development funding, whereas private counterparts receive no state capital but are granted regulatory exemptions.
- **Autonomy as a Driver for Research Output:** The central administrative goal of the IoE/WCI architecture is to liberate selected campuses from standard regulatory oversights. By granting extensive administrative, financial, and academic autonomy, the state seeks to enhance institutional agility, thereby elevating baseline academic standards, fostering cutting-edge research outputs, and facilitating international collaborations.



- **Key Educational and Administrative Definitions:** * **Institutions of Eminence (IoE):** A regulatory designation assigned by the University Grants Commission (UGC) to select higher education institutions to provide them complete autonomy to achieve world-class status.
 - **Academic Autonomy:** The statutory freedom granted to an educational institution to design its own curriculum, fix its admission criteria, determine tuition fees, and hire global faculty without seeking prior bureaucratic approval.
 - **Global Ranking Frameworks:** Standardized comparative metrics that assess global universities based on core indicators such as academic reputation, faculty-to-student ratios, research citations per faculty, and international student enrollment.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Seventh Schedule (Entry 66 of the Union List):** Empowers Parliament with exclusive jurisdiction over the coordination and determination of standards in institutions for higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions.
- **University Grants Commission (UGC) Act, 1956:** The statutory parent act under which the **UGC (Institutions of Eminence Deemed to be Universities) Regulations** were framed to legally grant financial and administrative exemptions to chosen universities.
- **Article 41 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Mandates that the State shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to education, which extends to improving the structural quality of higher learning.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The planned expansion of the World Class Institutions scheme highlights a strategic shift from rigid regulatory control to autonomy-driven excellence in higher education. Overcoming the structural deficits in research funding and internationalization remains critical for India to leverage its demographic dividend. For the UPSC Civil Services Examination, this policy initiative is highly relevant under **GS Paper II (Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education; Governance and institutional autonomy)**.

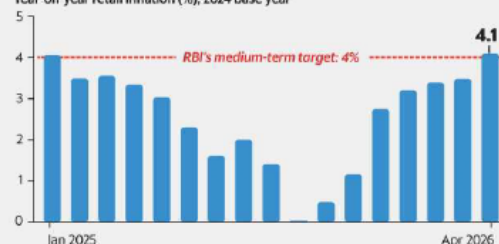
7. Target Breach: India's Retail Inflation Projected to Cross RBI Midpoint

- **Upside Trajectory in Retail Inflation:** A consensus poll of economists projects India's retail inflation to have risen to 4.1% in May from 3.5% in April. If officially realized, this will mark the first breach of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) 4% midpoint inflation target under the newly revised Consumer Price Index (CPI) series, which features an updated base year of 2024.
- **Food Basket Vulnerability and Heatwaves:** Food items serve as the primary structural driver of this surge, accounting for nearly 35% of the total CPI basket. High prices of perishables—including vegetables (which carry a standalone 7% weight), edible oils, cereals, pulses, and milk—have been severely exacerbated by intense, nationwide

Target breach

The median inflation estimate of 4.1% in May, if realized, would mark the first breach of RBI's midpoint target under the revised CPI series.

Year-on-year retail inflation (%), 2024 base year



May 2026 inflation is based on the median of forecasts by 16 economists in a Mint poll

Source: Statistics ministry, Mint poll

mint

GOPAKRISHN WARRIOR/MINT

heatwave conditions that disrupted supply chains and lowered crop yields.

- **Fuel Shock and Second-Round Spillover Effects:** Domestically, petrol and diesel prices were hiked four times within a single month, accumulating a steep increase of Rs 7.5 per litre. Accompanied by costlier Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), the RBI estimates that these fuel price hikes will inject 36 basis points directly into headline inflation, creating severe "second-round effects" where transport costs spill over into broader consumer goods.
- **Import Dynamics and Medium-Term Projections:** Beyond food and fuel, increased import duties on precious metals have added notable cost-push pressures. The RBI projects CPI inflation to stay elevated throughout the fiscal year, forecasting 4.2% in Q1, peaking sharply at 5.1% in Q2 and 5.9% in Q3, before gradually moderating to 5.4% by the final quarter.
- **Key Macroeconomic Definitions:**
 - * **Headline Inflation:** The raw, unadjusted inflation figure reported through the Consumer Price Index (CPI), reflecting total inflation within an economy including volatile commodities like food and fuel.
 - **Second-Round Effects:** An economic phenomenon where an initial supply-side price shock (e.g., rising fuel costs) transforms into generalized inflation by driving up wages, production inputs, and logistics costs across other sectors.
 - **Basis Points (bps):** A standard financial unit of measure for interest rates and other percentages in finance, where 1 basis point is equal to 1/100th of 1% (i.e., 100 bps = 1%).

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Act, 1934:** Amended in 2016 to provide a statutory basis for the implementation of the flexible inflation targeting framework. Under Section 45ZA, the Central Government, in consultation with the RBI, determines the inflation target once every five years.
- **Statutory Inflation Target Mandate:** The current statutory target is fixed at 4% with an upper tolerance limit of 6% and a lower tolerance limit of 2%. A breach of the 4% midpoint reduces the central bank's policy headroom for interest rate cuts.
- **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):** A statutory six-member body constituted under Section 45ZB of the amended RBI Act. The MPC meets at least four times a year to determine the policy repo rate required to achieve the inflation target while keeping the objective of growth in mind.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The projected breach of the 4% inflation midpoint highlights the persistence of supply-side bottlenecks and climate-induced food shocks in undermining monetary stability. Managing core prices without dampening industrial growth remains an intricate policy challenge for the MPC. For the UPSC Civil Services Examination, this issue is crucial under **GS Paper III (Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and monetary policy objectives)**.

8. Climate Risks and Fiscal Pressures: El Niño Vulnerability and the Fertiliser Subsidy Challenge

- **Identification of Climate Hotspots:** The Ministry of Agriculture has identified 197 districts across India as highly vulnerable to the adverse impacts of the El Niño phenomenon. To mitigate agrarian distress, state-wise agricultural contingency plans are being deployed alongside nationwide awareness campaigns to prepare farmers for potential monsoon abnormalities and water scarcity.
- **Fertiliser Subsidy Double-Whammy:** Coinciding with severe climate risks, India's national fertiliser subsidy burden is projected to escalate to nearly **Rs 3.4 lakh crore**—a 100% surge compared to the original Budget Estimate (BE) of Rs 1.7 lakh crore. This fiscal strain is driven by rising global sourcing costs triggered by severe international supply crunches and geopolitical instability.
- **The Hormuz Choke Point Fallout:** The supply crisis is compounded by logistical disruptions, specifically the near-closure of the **Strait of Hormuz** by Iran and subsequent US naval blockades. This geopolitical friction has led to acute port congestion on India's western seaboard, skyrocketing freight costs, and non-transparent logistical penalties like demurrage and detention charges by foreign shipping lines.
- **Strategic Procurement Countermeasures:** To guarantee domestic input availability ahead of unpredictable weather cycles, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) are floating urgent global import tenders. The government is also executing diversification strategies by actively tapping alternative channels, including **Russia**, while ramping up domestic chemical and organic production lines.
- **Key Agricultural and Economic Definitions:**
 - * **El Niño:** A climate pattern characterized by the unusual warming of surface waters in the eastern tropical Pacific Ocean, which historically disrupts the Indian Southwest Monsoon, leading to deficient rainfall and droughts.
 - **Strait of Hormuz:** A vital maritime choke point situated between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, serving as a transit route through which a significant share of the world's petroleum and chemical raw materials pass.
 - **Agricultural Contingency Plan:** A localized, district-level administrative strategy that outlines alternative cropping patterns, water-saving irrigation methods, and seed distribution protocols to handle severe weather aberrations.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 48 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Directs the State to endeavor to organize agriculture and animal husbandry on modern and scientific lines, providing the constitutional basis for climate-resilient contingency interventions.
- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Provides the legal architecture for decentralized planning, allowing District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs) to execute mitigation strategies and mobilize emergency funds during climate-induced crop failures.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Empowers the Central Government to control the production, supply, and distribution of fertilisers to ensure equitable access and prevent hoarding during supply chain shocks.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The convergence of El Niño risks and volatile global supply chains highlights the intricate link between climate vulnerability, geopolitics, and fiscal stability. Strengthening domestic production capacity and implementing scientific district-level adaptation strategies remain vital to securing India's food sovereign architecture. For the UPSC Civil Services Examination, this dual-crisis is highly significant under **GS Paper I (Important Geophysical phenomena - El Niño)**, **GS Paper II (Government policies and interventions)**, and **GS Paper III (Issues related to direct/indirect farm subsidies, cropping patterns, and logistics management)**.

9. Geo-Chemical Link Established: Chandrayaan-3 Data Connects Moon Soil to Antarctic Meteorite

- **Discovery of Shared Geochemical Signature:** A ground-breaking study led by Ahmedabad's Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), published in *Nature*, has established a direct chemical match between the lunar soil at Chandrayaan-3's landing site and an ancient lunar meteorite, **ALHA 81005**, discovered in Antarctica's Allan Hills in 1982.
- **Distinctive Elemental Composition:** Data collected *in-situ* by the Pragyan rover revealed that the soil at **Shiv Shakti Point** is uniquely iron- and magnesium-rich but deficient in aluminium. This specific chemical signature shows an elevated **magnesium number (Mg# 70)**, which perfectly mirrors the elemental configuration of the 1982 Antarctic specimen.
- **Confirmation of Lunar Subsurface Mix:** The soil composition at the South Pole site is distinct from ordinary mountainous regions, indicating that surface regolith contains components from deeper lunar layers. Scientists suggest that massive, ancient impact events—such as the formation of the nearby **South Pole-Aitken (SPA) basin**—excavated and redistributed lower crustal and upper mantle materials.
- **Validation of Lunar Magma Ocean Theory:** By matching a freshly-sampled polar zone with a random lunar meteorite thrown to Earth a million years ago, the study provides independent physical proof of the Lunar Magma Ocean (LMO) hypothesis. It confirms that early lunar evolution involved a deep, molten ocean layer that crystallized into diverse rock suites.
- **Key Astronomical and Geological Definitions:**
 - * **Regolith:** The loose, fragmented layer of dust and broken rocks covering the solid bedrock of the Moon, continuously reshaped by micrometeorite impacts.
 - **Feldspathic Highland Terrane (FHT):** A vast, geochemically distinct region covering roughly 65% of the lunar surface, primarily on the far side, dominated by ancient anorthosite rocks.
 - **Lithology:** The macroscopic physical and chemical characterization of a rock formation or soil sample based on its mineral composition, color, and texture.



Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 51A(h) (Fundamental Duties):** Mandates that it shall be the duty of every citizen of India to develop the scientific temper, humanism, and the spirit of inquiry and reform, which serves as the guiding principle for national deep-space exploration.
- **National Space Day:** The Government of India declared **August 23** as National Space Day to commemorate the soft-landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the lunar surface, regularizing space achievements within the national administrative calendar.
- **Space Science Promotion:** Handled via the Department of Space (DoS) under the direct supervision of the Prime Minister's Office, executing space policies through statutory allocations approved by Parliament.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The chemical link between Shiv Shakti Point and ALHA 81005 expands our understanding of lunar highland diversity and subsurface geological history. For the UPSC Civil Services Examination, this discovery is highly significant under **GS Paper III (Science and Technology- Awareness in the fields of Space; Achievements of Indians in science & technology; Indigenization of technology)**.

10. Regulatory Framework: Allocation of Election Symbols and the Use of Animals by Political Parties

- **Genesis of the Controversy:** Following a metaphorical remark by the Chief Justice of India using the term "cockroach," a youth pressure group named the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) staged protests and expressed intent to register as a formal political party, bringing public attention to the legal rules governing the allocation of election symbols.
- **Statutory Framework for Symbol Allotment:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) regulates the specification, reservation, and allotment of symbols across the country. Recognized national and state parties are assigned unique, reserved symbols (e.g., the lotus or the hand), while unrecognized registered parties or independent candidates must select from a dynamically updated list of "free symbols."
- **Ban on Allotting Animals as Symbols:** The ECI maintains a strict administrative stance against allotting living creatures or animals as new election symbols. This policy was instituted in the 1990s following intensive representations from animal welfare activists who demonstrated that tying live animals to fast-moving vehicles and using them in crowded political rallies led to widespread cruelty, injuries, and animal fatalities.
- **Exceptions and Legally Vested Rights:** The restriction on animal symbols applies strictly to new allocations and does not retroactively strip established parties of their historical identifiers. For instance, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) retains the elephant as its reserved national symbol because its allocation predates the enforcement of the modern animal ban.
- **Mechanism of the Free Symbols Pool:** The ECI revises its free symbols pool periodically, which consists of a diverse list of non-living items ranging from fruits and vegetables to household appliances and sports equipment. The pool contains approximately 184 generic symbols, allowing unrecognized political groups to request a preferred choice without a guarantee of exclusive allotment.

- **Key Electoral Definitions:**
 - * **Free Symbol:** A standardized symbol from an ECI-approved list that is not explicitly reserved for any recognized national or state political party and is available for temporary allocation to independent or unrecognized candidates.
 - **Pressure Group:** An organized assembly of individuals who seek to influence public policy, judicial outcomes, or societal discourse without actively contesting elections to capture formal state power.
 - **Recognized Political Party:** A registered political association that fulfills specific, minimum electoral performance criteria (such as vote share or seats won) in general assembly or parliamentary elections, granting them exclusive rights to a permanent symbol.

Constitutional and Legal Provisions

- **Article 324 of the Constitution:** Vests the superintendence, direction, and control of the preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of all elections to Parliament and State Legislatures in the Election Commission of India, serving as the source of its plenary regulatory powers.
- **Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968:** The definitive legal framework promulgated by the ECI that governs the registration of political parties, conditions for recognition, and the absolute protocols for symbol distribution or dispute resolution.
- **Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960:** The statutory bedrock that prohibits the infliction of unnecessary pain or suffering on animals, which structurally aligns with the ECI's policy decision to ban live creatures from active political campaigning.

Conclusion and UPSC Relevance

The strict codification of symbol allocation ensures an orderly, fair, and non-discriminatory electoral playing field while preventing commercial and environmental malpractice during campaigns. The evolution of these guidelines balances historical political identities with modern ethical standards of animal welfare. For the UPSC Civil Services Examination, this issue is highly relevant under **GS Paper II (Salient features of the Representation of People's Act; Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions, and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies like the ECI).**

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