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Dr. GINDI'S IAS ACADEMY

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

COVER ALL IMPORTANT CURRENT UPDATES
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Dr. GINDI'S I.A.S. ACADEMY
Civils & Competitive Careers
TRANSFORMING ASPIRANTS INTO ACHIEVERS

A/C CAMPUS

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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. International Jurist Navi Pillay Awarded Nobel Peace Prize

Key Highlights & Summary

- South African-born jurist of Tamil descent Navanethem "Navi" Pillay has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her lifelong defense of human rights and international law.
- She served as the first non-white female judge on South Africa's High Court after actively defending anti-apartheid activists.
- As a judge at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), she led the landmark 1998 *Akayesu* ruling, which defined sexual violence and rape as acts of genocide under international law.
- She previously served as a judge at the International Criminal Court (ICC) and as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) from 2008 to 2014.
- Pillay chaired the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel, highlighting severe violations of international humanitarian law.
- Currently, she serves as an ad hoc judge at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the genocide case of *The Gambia v. Myanmar*.

Essential Definitions

- **Genocide:** Defined under international law as acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group.
- **International Humanitarian Law (IHL):** A set of rules seeking to limit the effects of armed conflict, protecting non-combatants and restricting war methods.
- **Ad Hoc Judge:** A temporary judge appointed to a bench (such as the ICJ) for a specific case when a sitting bench lacks a national judge of a party state.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **UN Genocide Convention (1948):** Establishes the legal obligation of state parties to prevent and punish the crime of genocide during peace and war.
- **Rome Statute of the ICC (1998):** The foundational treaty that established the International Criminal Court to prosecute genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.
- **Indian Constitutional Provisions:**



A voice for human rights

Born to parents of Tamil descent under apartheid in South Africa, Navi Pillay rose to become a prominent jurist and advocate of international law and human rights

■ Challenged discrimination, segregation, and exclusion in apartheid-era South Africa	tribunal, and the International Criminal Court
■ Held judicial posts in South Africa's High Court, the Rwanda	■ Led the UN's human rights office as High Commissioner and chaired its inquiry into the Occupied Palestinian Territory
	■ Currently serves as a judge at the International Court of Justice in the genocide case against Myanmar

- **Article 51(c):** Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) directing the State to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **Article 253:** Empowers Parliament to legislate for giving effect to international agreements, treaties, and conventions.

Conclusion

Navi Pillay's recognition underscores the central role of international legal institutions in safeguarding global peace and accountability. Her career emphasizes that sustainable peace cannot exist without structural justice, human rights enforcement, and adherence to rule of law.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations & Polity):** Key multilateral bodies (UN, ICJ, ICC), international treaties, and constitutional mandates like Article 51(c) promoting international law.
- **GS Paper II & IV (Human Rights & Ethics):** Moral courage in public administration, combatting systemic discrimination, and establishing legal accountability against mass atrocities.

2. NTA Reforms: Parliamentary Standing Committee Recommendations

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Transition to CBT Mode:** The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education has recommended shifting major national entrance exams, including NEET-UG, to Computer-Based Test (CBT) mode to eliminate handling risks linked with pen-and-paper formats.
- **Dynamic Question Banks:** To prevent recurring paper leaks, the panel advocated using dynamic, randomized question sets generated from large, continuously updated question banks curated by top academic institutions like IITs, AIIMS, and IIMs.
- **Centralised Vendor Registry:** The committee urged creating a centralised, inter-agency digital registry of blacklisted and penalised vendors to stop compromised service providers from securing contracts across different state and central recruitment boards.
- **Multi-Session CBT & Fair Normalisation:** For large-scale exams, multi-session CBT schedules across independent shifts were proposed, provided any normalisation methodology used is mathematically robust, independently audited, and transparently explained beforehand.
- **Infrastructure & Capacity Building:** To bridge digital connectivity gaps in Tier-2, Tier-3, and rural areas, the report suggests using mid-sized IT labs (100–200 nodes) in public universities, government engineering colleges, and polytechnics.
- **Institutional Governance:** The panel flagged severe workforce shortages in NTA, noting a vacancy rate exceeding 40% in key permanent positions, while also advising against invasive physical searches that create student anxiety.

Essential Definitions

- **Computer-Based Test (CBT):** An assessment system conducted online or via secure digital networks where questions are displayed on computer screens and responses are submitted digitally.
- **Normalisation Methodology:** A mathematical standardisation process applied to align difficulty levels of question papers across multi-session examinations to ensure equitable evaluation.
- **Hybrid Encrypted Delivery:** A security protocol where test papers remain encrypted and are securely transmitted digitally to examination terminals right up to the start time.

Implementation in progress ^{HT}

2 years after NEET leak panel was formed, key fixes remain

WHAT'S BEEN DONE

- NTA restructuring — domain-specific leadership, psychometric expertise (rolled out this year, after protests)
- 16 new permanent posts advertised at NTA; specialist hires in cybersecurity, digital forensics, assessment research and test-centre operations
- Strengthened frisking and repeat biometric verification after bio-breaks, tighter candidate verification

ANNOUNCED BUT NOT ROLLED OUT

- Multi-session testing for large examinations
- Multi-stage format for NEET-UG
- Shift of NEET-UG to a computer-based, multi-session format

WHAT HASN'T BEEN DONE

- DIGI-EXAM identity verification system
- Hybrid, computer-assisted secure question-paper transmission
- Collaborations with global testing agencies

The core recommendation that NTA stop conducting recruitment tests and focus on entrance exams has not been implemented. 21 of the panel's 41 long-term structural reforms remain untouched, an HT analysis found.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024:** Enacted to prevent leakages, cheating, and fraudulent practices in public recruitment and national entrance tests through stringent penal provisions.
- **National Testing Agency (NTA):** Established under the Societies Registration Act, 1860, as an autonomous premier testing organization to conduct transparent and international-standard entrance assessments.
- **Constitutional Mandate (Article 21):** Ensuring fair, merit-based, and non-arbitrary public entrance examinations falls under the broader scope of right to equality (Article 14) and right to life and dignified livelihood (Article 21).

Conclusion

The recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee highlight a urgent need for structural, technological, and administrative overhauls in India's national testing framework. Transitioning to secure CBT infrastructure, establishing vendor accountability, and filling organizational vacancies will restore public trust and protect student merit.

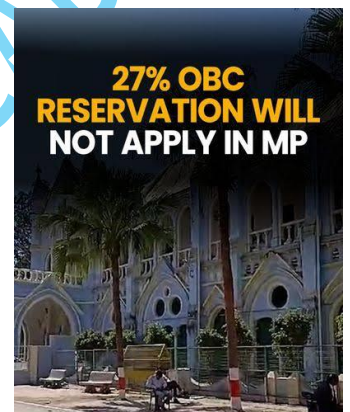
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Administrative Reforms):** Role and functioning of autonomous testing bodies, public service delivery, administrative reforms in statutory/non-statutory bodies, and parliamentary oversight mechanisms.
- **GS Paper II & III (Education & Digital Infrastructure):** Strengthening digital infrastructure in Tier-2/3 regions, curbing examination malpractices through legislative measures, and policy interventions under the National Education Policy framework.

3. Madhya Pradesh High Court Strikes Down 27% OBC Quota Law

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Invalidation of 2019 Act:** The Madhya Pradesh High Court struck down the M.P. Public Service (Reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs) Amendment Act, 2019, which hiked Other Backward Classes (OBC) reservation from 14% to 27%.
- **Breach of 50% Ceiling:** A Division Bench ruled the enhanced quota unconstitutional as the State failed to demonstrate any "extraordinary conditions or emergent situations" required to breach the 50% judicial ceiling on reservations.
- **Filling Pending Posts:** The Court directed recruitment authorities to process the 13% posts held on hold since September 2022 for unreserved candidates within three months based on existing selection lists.
- **Protection of Past Appointments:** Appointments made under the 27% quota between March 2019 and September 2022 have been protected and will remain safe.
- **Adequate Representation Findings:** Based on higher education and public employment data, the Court observed that OBCs in the State are adequately represented as per Constitutional mandates.
- **Interim 87:13 Formula Concluded:** The ruling concludes the long-standing sub-judice status that previously forced the government to conduct recruitment under an 87:13 formula.



Essential Definitions

- **50% Reservation Ceiling:** A binding judicial threshold laid down by the Supreme Court limiting total affirmative action quotas in public employment and education to 50%, barring exceptional circumstances.
- **Adequate Representation:** A constitutional metric under Article 16(4) assessing whether a backward class is sufficiently represented in State services, distinct from proportionate representation.
- **Sub-Judice:** A legal matter currently under judicial consideration and awaiting final determination by a court of law.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 15(4) & 16(4):** Empower the State to make special provisions and reservations in public appointments for any backward class of citizens not adequately represented in State services.
- **Indra Sawhney Case (1992):** Landmark Supreme Court ruling establishing the 50% upper cap on reservations and ruling out reservation solely on economic or population grounds without quantifiable empirical data.
- **M.R. Balaji Case (1963):** Earlier precedent establishing that excessive reservation would breach the principle of equality under Article 14 and Article 16(1).

Conclusion

The High Court's verdict reinforces that affirmative action must operate within established constitutional bounds and empirical justification. By invalidating the quota hike lacking extraordinary justification, the judgment balances compensatory discrimination with administrative efficiency and equal opportunity.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Constitutional provisions governing reservation (Articles 15 and 16), judicial review of state legislations, statutory limits on affirmative action, and rights of backward classes.
- **GS Paper II (Judiciary):** Enforcement of constitutional ceilings by High Courts and judicial oversight over executive and legislative policies.

4. SC Rejects A.P. Plea to Restore 34% BC Quota in Local Bodies

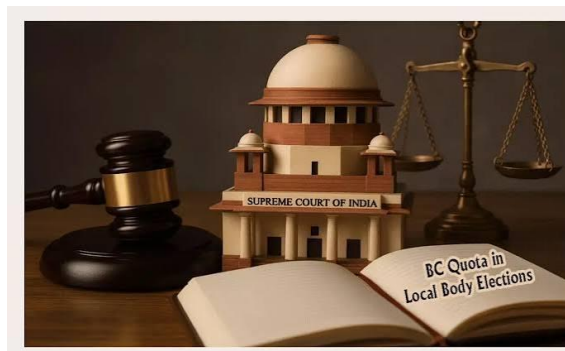
Key Highlights & Summary

- **Dismissal of State Appeal:** The Supreme Court dismissed the Andhra Pradesh government's appeal against a High Court decision striking down its proposal to restore 34% reservation for Backward Classes (BC) in local bodies.
- **Failure to Meet Empirical Standard:** The Bench, comprising Justices Dipankar Datta and Sheel Nagu, held that figures drawn from a "unified family survey" are insufficient to justify enhanced quotas without specific empirical assessment of political backwardness.
- **Enforcement of 50% Cap:** The apex court reaffirmed that any reservation policy breaching the 50% total ceiling in local self-governance institutions requires strict adherence to constitutional parameters.
- **Rejection of Survey Methodology:** The Court questioned the legal basis of using generalized household data instead of focused commission-led empirical inquiries dedicated to local body representation.
- **State's Defense Argument:** Senior counsel for Andhra Pradesh contended that the 2026 quota exercise relied on a fresh survey, local-body specific data, and dedicated commission findings, which the High Court had previously rejected.
- **Political Response:** In response to the judicial verdict, the ruling dispensation affirmed its commitment to ensure 34% representation for Backward Classes through internal candidate selection in local polls.

Essential Definitions

- **Triple Test Conditions:** A mandatory three-step framework established by the Supreme Court requiring a dedicated commission, empirical inquiry into political backwardness, and adherence to the 50% reservation ceiling for local body quotas.

- **Political Backwardness:** A distinct category of backwardness evaluated specifically for political representation in local self-government, which differs from social or educational backwardness used under Article 15 and 16.
- **Unified Family Survey:** A general demographic or socio-economic household survey conducted by states, which courts have ruled inadequate for determining political backwardness without specialized statutory analysis.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 243D(6) & Article 243T(6):** Constitutional provisions enabling state legislatures to make provisions for reservation of seats in Panchayats and Municipalities in favor of backward classes.
- **K. Krishna Murthy Case (2010):** Landmark Supreme Court ruling holding that political reservation under Part IX and IXA is distinct from employment/educational reservation and must not exceed the 50% upper limit.
- **Vikas Kishanrao Gawali Case (2021):** Apex court decision mandating strict compliance with the 'Triple Test' before reserving seats for OBCs/BCs in local self-government elections.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court ruling reinforces the necessity of strict judicial scrutiny when states alter local body reservation quotas. By invalidating general family surveys as a substitute for rigorous empirical data, the judicial precedent ensures that affirmative action in local governance remains legally sound and constitutionally compliant.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Local self-government dynamics (Panchayati Raj and Municipalities), Article 243D/243T mandates, and judicial interpretation of democratic representation.
- **GS Paper II (Judicial Oversight & Federal Structure):** Supreme Court enforcement of constitutional ceilings, statutory standards for state policy formulation, and legal limits on state-sponsored affirmative action.

5. Bamboo Replacing Poppy Patches in Manipur Jungles

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Ecological Restoration Drive:** The Manipur Forest Department has undertaken bamboo plantation across 255 hectares of forestland previously cleared for illegal poppy cultivation in the hill districts of Chandel, Churachandpur, and Senapati.
- **Mitigating Ethnic Conflict Driver:** Illegal poppy cultivation on deforested land has been identified as one of the key underlying drivers of the ongoing ethnic conflict in the state.

- **Alternative Livelihood Strategy:** The state is engaging village chiefs to discourage illegal poppy farming by providing sustainable bamboo-based economic alternatives for local communities.
- **Biological Control of Invading Flora:** Forest officials are searching for fast-dominating plant species to outgrow fast-spreading poppy crops, using bamboo as an interim ecological barrier.
- **Forest Profile of Manipur:** Approximately 78% of Manipur's geographical area is classified as forestland, whereas the actual forest cover stands at around 74%.
- **Border Security & Anti-Smuggling:** Inter-agency coordination between forest officials, security forces, and intelligence agencies has yielded ₹115 crore from seized illegal forest products like Burmese teak and areca nuts smuggled across the India-Myanmar border.

Essential Definitions

- **Alternative Development:** An integrated development approach aimed at reducing illegal drug crop cultivation by providing sustainable rural livelihoods and economic opportunities to farming communities.
- **Forest Cover:** All land area spanning more than one hectare with a tree canopy density of more than 10%, irrespective of ownership and legal status, as measured by satellite remote sensing.
- **Ecosystem Restoration:** The process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged, or destroyed due to illegal land-use changes or deforestation.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985:** Prohibits the unauthorized cultivation of opium poppy, cannabis, and coca plants, empowering enforcement agencies to destroy illegal plantations.
- **Indian Forest Act, 1927 & Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980:** Regulates forest classification, restricts non-forest activities on forestland, and penalized illegal encroachments and deforestation.
- **Constitutional Directive (Article 48A):** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.

Conclusion

Replacing illicit poppy fields with eco-friendly bamboo plantations provides a sustainable blueprint for countering narco-deforestation and rural insurgency. Combining strict law enforcement with alternative livelihood generation strengthens environmental resilience while restoring law and order in fragile border zones.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Internal Security & Border Management):** Linkages between drug trafficking, illegal cross-border smuggling along the India-Myanmar border, organized crime, and internal ethnic conflicts.

- **GS Paper III (Environment & Governance):** Forest conservation strategies, ecological restoration, combating narco-deforestation, and alternative development models for sustainable rural livelihoods.

6. No Restrictive Live-Streaming of Court Proceedings, Says Supreme Court

Key Highlights & Summary

- **No Blanket Gag Orders:** The Supreme Court affirmed that there will be no gagging or restrictive measures imposed on the live-streaming of court proceedings, emphasizing transparency in judicial functioning.
- **Concern Over Misuse and Commercialisation:** A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V. Mohana expressed severe concern over the commercial monetization, advertising, and sensationalized sharing of courtroom video clips on social media platforms.
- **Damage to Judicial Integrity:** The apex court highlighted that out-of-context video snippets circulated for commercial gains cause significant reputational damage to the Bar, the Bench, and the judiciary as an institution.
- **Open Court Principle Maintained:** The Court reaffirmed its commitment to the open-court system, stating that while live-streaming will continue, regulatory checks are necessary to curb misrepresentation.
- **Regulatory Response Requested:** The Supreme Court granted the Union Government a two-week timeline to file its reply regarding potential frameworks to prevent the commercial misuse of judicial footage.
- **Balancing Access and Accountability:** The proceedings underscore the judicial effort to maintain public access to proceedings while curbing sensationalism driven by social media algorithms.

Essential Definitions

- **Live-Streaming of Court Proceedings:** Real-time broadcasting of judicial hearings to the public via digital platforms, aimed at enhancing transparency and public access to justice.
- **Open Court Principle:** A fundamental judicial doctrine holding that court proceedings must be held publicly and transparently to ensure fairness, institutional accountability, and public confidence.
- **Judicial Misrepresentation:** The practice of selectively editing, altering, or broadcasting out-of-context audio-visual footage of court proceedings to mislead the public or generate commercial revenue.

Legal and Constitutional Framework



- **Swapnil Tripathi v. Supreme Court of India (2018):** Landmark Supreme Court ruling that declared live-streaming of court proceedings an extension of the open-court principle under Article 145(4) of the Constitution.
- **Article 19(1)(a) & Article 19(2):** Freedom of speech and expression includes the citizen's right to know about judicial proceedings, subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) such as public order and decency.
- **Article 21:** The right to access justice and transparent judicial administration is an integral part of the right to life and personal liberty.
- **Contempt of Courts Act, 1971:** Provides statutory powers to penalize acts that scandalize, lower the authority of, or obstruct the administration of justice.

Conclusion

The Supreme Court's stance balances institutional dignity with democratic transparency. While preserving the open-court philosophy established in *Swapnil Tripathi*, addressing the unregulated commercialization of court video clips remains crucial to safeguarding the sanctity of judicial deliberations.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Open-court principles, digital initiatives in the judiciary (e-Courts project), judicial accountability, and balancing constitutional rights with institutional safeguards.
- **GS Paper II & IV (Judiciary & Ethics):** Judicial dignity, impact of social media misrepresentation on public trust, and ethical standards in public discourse surrounding legal processes.

7. Rights & Restrictions Around Holding Peaceful Protests

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Denial of Protest Permission:** Delhi Police denied permission to a pressure group to hold a demonstration at Jantar Mantar, citing short notice (less than the standard 10-day prior application window).
- **Balance of Rights and Regulation:** In *Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (2018)*, the Supreme Court ruled that citizens have a fundamental right to peaceful protest, but police can impose reasonable regulations to manage public order and residential inconvenience.
- **No Blanket Rejections:** The Supreme Court emphasized that police permission requirements must not become a routine tool to reject protests, advocating alternative regulatory measures over total prohibitions.
- **Prohibitory Orders Framework:** Magistrates can invoke prohibitory orders under Section 163 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) [formerly Section 144 CrPC] to restrict public assemblies in urgent situations threatening public order.
- **Right to Legal Challenge:** In *Babulal Parate (1961)*, the Supreme Court confirmed that aggrieved persons have a constitutional right under Article 226/32 to challenge prohibitory or refusal orders issued by authorities.

- **Penal Consequences for Violation:** Demonstrating without permission or violating a valid prohibitory order attracts criminal liability under Section 223 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) [formerly Section 188 IPC].

Essential Definitions

- **Right to Protest:** An implicit fundamental right derived from freedoms of speech, expression, and peaceful assembly without arms under Article 19.
- **Prohibitory Order:** A formal written directive issued by an Executive Magistrate under Section 163 of BNSS to restrict public gatherings to prevent urgent threat to public order or safety.
- **Reasonable Restrictions:** Legally permissible limitations imposed by the State on fundamental rights under grounds explicitly enumerated in Articles 19(2) and 19(3).



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 19(1)(a) & 19(1)(b):** Guarantees freedom of speech, expression, and the right to assemble peaceably and without arms.
- **Article 19(2) & 19(3):** Empowers the State to impose reasonable restrictions on speech and assembly in the interests of public order, sovereignty, and integrity of India.
- **Section 163 of BNSS (formerly Section 144 CrPC):** Authorizes Magistrates to issue urgent orders to prohibit assemblies and manage potential public tranquility risks.
- **Section 223 of BNS (formerly Section 188 IPC):** Penalizes willful disobedience to lawful orders issued by public servants.

Conclusion

The legal landscape surrounding public protests requires a delicate balance between democratic freedoms and public tranquility. Regulatory mechanisms must facilitate citizens' rights to express grievances while ensuring restrictions remain proportionate, non-arbitrary, and subject to judicial review.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Fundamental Rights under Article 19, execution of executive discretionary powers, prohibitory orders, and judicial safeguards against arbitrary police action.
- **GS Paper II & IV (Administrative Law & Ethics):** Balancing civic rights with public safety, civil liberties, and regulatory compliance by law enforcement authorities.

8. How India's Growth Rate Keeps Beating Forecasts

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Upgraded GDP Forecast:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) raised its current financial year GDP growth forecast to 7.1%, showcasing strong economic resilience despite geopolitical challenges.
- **Yo-Yoing Forecast Trajectory:** RBI's projections fluctuated at the start of the financial year from 6.9% down to 6.6% in June, before rising to 6.7% in August and reaching 7.1% presently.
- **Shift in Forecasting Accuracy:** Up until the 2021-22 financial year, actual GVA growth rates mostly fell short of early-fiscal forecasts, but since FY23, actual economic performance has consistently outperformed expectations.
- **Conservative Outlook by Forecasters:** Economic analysts attribute the persistent under-forecasting to a psychological shift toward conservatism driven by global turmoil, including the Russia-Ukraine war, crude oil crises, and trade tariffs.
- **The 2016-17 Growth Anomaly:** Despite demonetization withdrawing 86% of the money supply in November 2016, actual GVA grew by 8%, outperforming the median March 2017 forecast of 6.7%.
- **Survey of Professional Forecasters:** Since September 2007, the RBI has conducted a bimonthly survey involving respected economists to track median economic forecasts for real Gross Value Added (GVA).

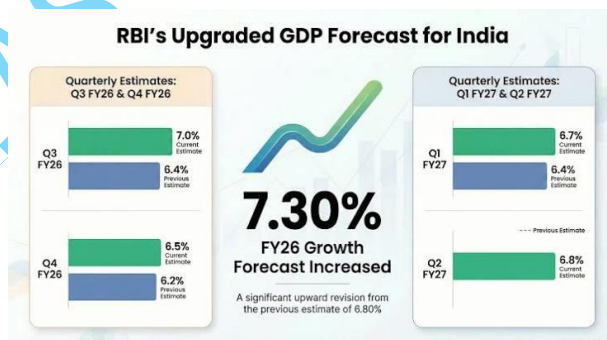
Essential Definitions

- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** The total monetary value of all finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period, calculated by taking GVA, adding taxes, and removing subsidies.
- **Gross Value Added (GVA):** A measure of total economic output and productivity that subtracts intermediate consumption and input costs from total production value before adjusting for taxes and subsidies.
- **Monetary Policy Review:** A periodic evaluation by the central bank (RBI) assessing macroeconomic conditions to adjust key interest rates and liquidity frameworks.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934:** Statutory mandate empowering the RBI to regulate the monetary policy framework, maintain price stability, and promote balanced economic growth.
- **Article 282 of the Constitution:** Relates to defraying financial grants and public expenditures by the Union or States, tied closely to national macroeconomic planning and budgetary allocations.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003:** Legislative framework aiming to ensure macro-financial stability, transparency, and prudent fiscal management in the Indian economy.

Conclusion



India's growth rate consistently beating official forecasts reflects underlying macroeconomic strength and structural adaptability in the face of global shocks. While forecasters have turned increasingly conservative due to ongoing geopolitical uncertainties, the economy continues to demonstrate robust momentum.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Indian Economy & Economic Development):** Trends in GDP and GVA growth, economic forecasting, impact of monetary policies, and post-pandemic macroeconomic recovery.
- **GS Paper III (Planning & Growth):** Government policy interventions, resilience against international supply chain disruptions, and institutional mechanisms of central banking in India.

9. Survival, Habitat: Challenges in Rewilding Great Indian Bustard

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Milestone Rewilding Initiative:** Two captive-bred male Great Indian Bustards (GIBs) were released into the wild for the first time at Desert National Park in Rajasthan under Project GIB, executed jointly by the Centre, Wildlife Institute of India (WII), and state governments.
- **Critical Population Decline:** From an estimated 1,260–1,400 individuals in the 1970s, the wild GIB population has plummeted to around 150 globally, with approximately 130 (+/-20) concentrated in Rajasthan and small populations facing local extinction across Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh.
- **Threats Driving Extinction:** Key drivers of decline include habitat loss from land conversion, hunting, limestone mining, and collisions with high-voltage renewable energy powerlines, exacerbated by the bird's poor frontal vision and heavy body weight.
- **Captive Breeding Success:** Initiated in 2019, artificial incubation of wild-collected eggs at centers in Sam and Ramdevra has yielded 98 birds so far, providing the stock for gradual soft-release and rewilding programs.
- **Grassland Ecosystem Vulnerability:** Unlike forests, open natural ecosystems like savannas and grasslands lack public recognition as protected habitats, leaving them vulnerable to degradation and misplaced afforestation initiatives that alter bustard habitats.
- **Supreme Court Mandates:** Accepting expert recommendations, the apex court ordered the undergrounding of 80 km of powerlines in priority habitats in Rajasthan and Gujarat, alongside creating dedicated powerline corridors for rerouted lines.



Essential Definitions

- **Rewilding:** The ecological practice of restoring natural processes and reintroducing captive-bred or displaced animal species back into wild natural habitats.

- **Soft Release:** A conservation methodology where captive-reared animals are acclimatized in protected natural enclosures at the release site prior to full liberation into the wild.
- **Open Natural Ecosystems (ONEs):** Non-forested terrestrial biomes, including grasslands, shrublands, and savannas, that support specialized, endemic fauna such as the Great Indian Bustard.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** The Great Indian Bustard is listed under Schedule I, providing it the highest degree of legal protection against hunting and habitat destruction.
- **IUCN Red List & CITES Status:** Categorized as 'Critically Endangered' on the IUCN Red List and listed under Appendix I of CITES and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS).
- **Constitutional Directives:** Article 48A mandates the State to protect and improve the environment, while Article 51A(g) places a fundamental duty on citizens to protect wildlife and have compassion for living creatures.

Conclusion

The experimental rewilding of the Great Indian Bustard represents a vital step toward saving India's flagship grassland species from the brink of extinction. However, long-term survival depends on securing grassland ecosystems, enforcing powerline undergrounding, and balancing green energy expansion with biodiversity conservation.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Environment & Ecology):** Biodiversity conservation, species recovery programs (Project GIB), threats to endemic species, and challenges of captive breeding and rewilding.
- **GS Paper III (Infrastructure & Conservation Conflict):** Balancing renewable energy infrastructure development with environmental impact assessments and wildlife protection mandates.

10. Mass Mobilisation and the Immovable State in Contemporary Governance

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Unique Democratic Deadlock:** Mass movements against examination conduct and the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) process have produced a structural impasse between civil mobilisations and state authority.
- **Institutional Trust Deficit:** Public anger has expanded beyond political executive offices to engulf autonomous bodies, including the Election Commission and judicial forums.
- **State Containment Strategy:** Executive responses rely on heavy security deployments, administrative restrictions, and attrition strategies, assuming continuous social movements are difficult to sustain long-term.
- **Mechanisms of Movement Leverage:** Unlike economic blockades, public mobilisations derive leverage from the broad legitimacy of non-violent, non-revolutionary demands and electoral vulnerabilities across key states.

- **Preservation of Institutional Credibility:** Restoring public faith in regulatory and constitutional bodies requires substantive structural accountability rather than superficial policy concessions or palliative measures.
- **Global Governance Phenomenon:** The convergence of persistent public protest and state inertia reflects a wider international trend where formal democratic institutions face crises of responsiveness.

Essential Definitions

- **Mass Mobilisation:** The process of organizing and assembling large segments of civil society to articulate grievances, demand institutional accountability, or drive policy reform.
- **Institutional Legitimacy:** The normative authority and public trust enjoyed by constitutional and statutory bodies, essential for voluntary compliance and governance stability.
- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR):** A comprehensive administrative exercise conducted by electoral authorities to audit, update, and verify voter registration rolls.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 19(1)(a) & 19(1)(b):** Guarantees freedom of speech, expression, and peaceful assembly without arms, forming the democratic bedrock for civil mobilization and public dissent.
- **Article 324:** Vests the superintendence, direction, and control of elections in the Election Commission of India, mandating non-partisan and transparent electoral administration.
- **Judicial Review (Article 32 & 226):** Empowers the Judiciary to review executive and administrative actions to ensure compliance with constitutional principles and fundamental rights.

Conclusion

The confrontation between public mobilisations and state resistance underscores a growing imperative for institutional reform. Sustained democratic stability relies on independent institutions actively addressing societal grievances, maintaining transparency, and protecting public trust rather than relying on coercive containment.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Pressure groups and formal/informal associations, civic participation in democratic processes, and challenges to institutional credibility in regulatory bodies.
- **GS Paper II (Constitutional Framework):** Role of independent statutory authorities under Article 324, administrative ethics, and judicial oversight of state authority.

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