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Dr. GINDI'S IAS ACADEMY

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

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Dr. GINDI'S I.A.S. ACADEMY
Civils & Competitive Careers
TRANSFORMING ASPIRANTS INTO ACHIEVERS

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A/C CAMPUS

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DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS

1. NCERT Curriculum Revision: Focus on Medieval Indian History and Regional Resistance

Key Highlights & Summary

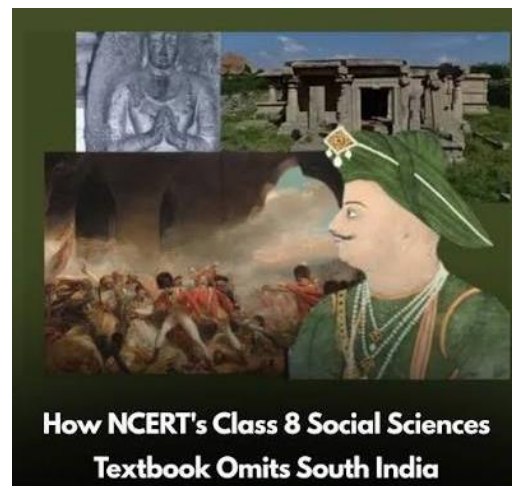
- The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) released a new Class 9 Social Science textbook titled *Understanding Society: India and Beyond - Part Two*.
- The new textbook replaces chapters on European revolutions, such as the French and Russian Revolutions, with content focusing on medieval Indian history and indigenous sovereignty.
- It details Indian responses to foreign expansionist powers between 1,000 CE and 1,700 CE, citing territorial expansion, religious motives, and economic surplus as primary drivers of invasions.
- The chapter titled "Resistance and Resilience" covers the relation between the Mughal state and Sikh Gurus, noting executions and detentions that led to collective armed resistance.
- Regional resistance movements, including the Jat Uprising of 1669 driven by heavy Mughal taxation and religious policies, are given dedicated coverage.
- The text traces the evolution of Sikh military confederacies, including Guru Hargobind's establishment of the Akal Takht.

Essential Definitions

- **Akal Takht:** A temporal seat of authority established by Guru Hargobind, symbolizing the military and political empowerment of the Sikh community.
- **Iqta System:** An agrarian revenue-cum-administrative system prevalent during the Delhi Sultanate, where revenue rights were granted in exchange for military or administrative service.
- **Doab:** A geographic region lying between two converging rivers; specifically, the Ganga-Yamuna Doab mentioned in the context of the 1669 Jat peasant rebellion.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 351 (Directive for Development of the Hindi Language/Cultural Heritage):** Supports the promotion of indigenous history and heritage in educational frameworks.
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** Emphasizes rooting the school curriculum in the Indian context, ethos, and local historical narratives to foster national identity and critical awareness.
- **Entry 25, Concurrent List (Seventh Schedule):** Grants both the Parliament and State Legislatures the power to legislate on Education, forming the jurisdictional basis for NCERT's curriculum updates.



Conclusion

The curriculum update by NCERT reflects a strategic paradigm shift toward a subcontinental, resistance-focused narrative of medieval history. By highlighting local confederacies, socio-economic factors behind peasant uprisings, and indigenous statecraft, the revised text aims to present a balanced view of historical resilience alongside global events.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I (History & Culture):** Medieval Indian History, socio-religious movements, regional kingdoms, and agrarian revolts against central authority.
- **GS Paper II (Governance & Education):** Implementation of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, institutional role of NCERT, and legislative divisions under the Concurrent List.

2. India-Japan Defence Cooperation: UNICORN Naval Radar Agreement and Security Dynamics

Key Highlights & Summary

- Japan has urged India to expedite internal clearances for the Transfer of Technology (ToT) agreement regarding the UNICORN (Unified Complex Radio Antenna) naval radar system signed during Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's visit.
- The next edition of the Quad member-states' joint naval exercise is scheduled to take place near the Sea of Japan before the end of the year.
- Japanese defence officials expressed heightened security concerns over the non-transparent military expansion of China and joint China-Russia bomber flights operating near Japanese airspace.
- Emerging strategic dynamics in the Indo-Pacific include North Korea receiving critical military technology from Russia in exchange for aiding Russian efforts in Ukraine.
- Japan plans to overhaul its core policy documents on defence, national security, and military supply plans in response to ongoing global conflicts in West Asia and Ukraine.

- Reaffirming its constitutional posture, official Japanese policy maintains a commitment to non-aggression, stating that Japan will adhere to a defense-oriented strategy and not strike first.

Essential Definitions

- **UNICORN (Unified Complex Radio Antenna):** An advanced naval mast system integrating multiple antennas beneath a single horn-shaped dome to reduce radar cross-section and enhance stealth capabilities on warships.
- **Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA):** A bilateral defence logistics agreement that allows the armed forces of India and Japan to exchange supplies, services, and base support during joint exercises and humanitarian missions.
- **Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue):** A strategic security dialogue comprising India, Japan, the United States, and Australia aimed at maintaining a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 9 of the Constitution of Japan:** Renounces war as a sovereign right and prohibits maintaining land, sea, and air forces with war potential, anchoring Japan's strictly defense-oriented military posture.
- **Article 73 of the Constitution of India:** Extends executive power of the Union to foreign affairs, international treaties, and defence co-operation agreements.
- **India-Japan Defense Equipment and Technology Transfer Agreement (2015):** The bilateral legal framework governing joint research, development, and co-production of military hardware and dual-use technologies.

Conclusion The push to operationalize the UNICORN radar technology agreement underscores the deepening defense cooperation between India and Japan amid evolving Indo-Pacific security challenges. Timely execution of technology transfers and joint naval engagements strengthens bilateral interoperability while reinforcing regional maritime stability.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** India-Japan bilateral relations, Quad grouping, regional security architecture in the Indo-Pacific, and strategic maritime partnerships.
- **GS Paper III (Security):** Defence procurement, indigenization of technology, Transfer of Technology (ToT) frameworks, and maritime domain awareness.

3. Supreme Court Expresses Concern Over Steep Mark-Ups on Essential Drugs

Key Highlights & Summary

- The Supreme Court of India expressed strong concern over massive price disparities between the Price to Retailer (PTR) and the Maximum Retail Price (MRP) charged to consumers, particularly for life-saving cancer medications.

- The Bench questioned why the 16% retailer margin prescribed under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO), 2013, should not be applied uniformly across all essential drugs to eliminate excessive profit margins.
- Highlighting specific instances, the Court noted a nearly ten-fold mark-up on an essential cancer drug—supplied to retailers for around ₹3,000 but sold to patients for ₹27,000.
- An anomaly in pricing was also pointed out where Rosuvas (a standalone statin) costs ₹240 per strip, while its combination with aspirin, a scheduled formulation under price control, costs merely ₹70 per strip.
- The Centre submitted that private hospitals, rather than pharmaceutical manufacturers, often reap the benefits of these steep mark-ups through institutional procurement.
- The Court flagged the practice of private hospitals compelling patients to purchase medicines exclusively from in-house pharmacies, depriving them of affordable market alternatives.



Essential Definitions

- **Price to Retailer (PTR):** The price at which a pharmaceutical manufacturer or distributor sells a drug formulation to a retail chemist or institutional buyer.
- **Maximum Retail Price (MRP):** The maximum statutory price at which a drug can be sold to the end consumer, inclusive of all local taxes and trade margins.
- **Scheduled Formulations:** Essential medicines listed under National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM) whose ceiling prices are strictly regulated under the DPCO framework.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 21 of the Indian Constitution:** Guarantees the Right to Life and Personal Liberty, which the Supreme Court has consistently expanded to include the right to accessible and affordable healthcare.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Provides the statutory backing under which the Central Government issues price control orders for essential goods, including drugs.
- **Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO), 2013:** Executed by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) under the Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers to fix maximum prices and regulate trade margins for scheduled formulations.

Conclusion The Supreme Court's scrutiny highlights the urgent necessity for regulatory reform in drug pricing mechanisms and institutional practices of private healthcare providers. Implementing rationalized trade margins across both scheduled and non-scheduled essential drugs remains vital to curbing profiteering, ensuring equitable healthcare access, and protecting citizens from catastrophic health expenditure.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Social Justice):** Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, government policies, and regulatory mechanisms.

- **GS Paper III (Economy):** Price regulation mechanisms, function of regulatory bodies (NPPA), and consumer welfare interventions under the Essential Commodities Act.

4. Activists Caution Against Efforts to Revive Bauxite Mining in Odisha's Niyamgiri Hills

Key Highlights & Summary

- The National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM) has cautioned against fresh attempts to restart bauxite mining in the Niyamgiri hills, situated across Odisha's Kalahandi and Rayagada districts.
- Environmental activists responded to comments by industrial leadership advocating for the reopening of the bauxite reserves under the premise of employment generation for local populations.
- The Niyamgiri hills serve as the sacred and ancestral habitat of the Dongria Kondh, a designated Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG).
- Mining operations by the Vedanta Group were halted nearly 13 years ago following sustained resistance from local indigenous communities.
- Following historic directions by the Supreme Court, 12 village Gram Sabhas unanimously rejected the proposed mining project in 2013 to protect their socio-cultural and religious rights.
- Rights activists highlighted concerns regarding the arrest and detention of local tribal leaders, characterizing these actions as attempts to weaken community opposition.



Essential Definitions

- **Dongria Kondh:** A Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) inhabiting the Niyamgiri hill range, known for their deep ecological worship of Niyam Raja (the lord of the hills).
- **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs):** A specialized sub-category among Scheduled Tribes identified by stagnant or declining population, pre-agricultural technology, extremely low literacy, and subsistence-level economy.
- **Gram Sabha:** A statutory body consisting of all registered voters residing within a village panchayat, empowered to make decisions regarding local governance and resource conservation.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Fifth Schedule of the Constitution:** Guarantees administrative protection and safeguards tribal lands against unlawful alienation in Scheduled Areas.
- **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), 1996:** Mandates statutory consultation and prior informed consent of the Gram Sabha for land acquisition and resource management in Scheduled Areas.

- **Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (FRA), 2006:** Formally recognizes individual and community forest rights, including religious and cultural ownership rights of indigenous groups.

Conclusion The opposition to renewing bauxite extraction in Niyamgiri underscores the delicate balance between industrial mineral extraction and indigenous rights. Sustaining the democratic authority of local Gram Sabhas remains essential for upholding constitutional guarantees and protecting fragile ecosystems inhabited by vulnerable tribal communities.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I (Indian Society & Geography):** Cultural identity and rights of PVTGs, environmental protection movements, and geographical distribution of strategic mineral reserves.
- **GS Paper II (Governance & Polity):** Fifth Schedule provisions, PESA Act execution, Gram Sabha empowerment, and protection of vulnerable sections.

5. CAQM Tightens Winter Pollution Restrictions Under Revised GRAP in Delhi-NCR

Key Highlights & Summary

- The Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) announced tighter restrictions under a revised Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) to curb severe winter air pollution across Delhi and adjoining National Capital Region (NCR) districts.
- A major policy shift removes the previous exemption that permitted non-BS-VI compliant trucks carrying essential commodities to enter Delhi during Stage 4 extreme pollution levels.
- Under Stage 4, only Electric Vehicles (EVs), BS-VI compliant trucks, or commercial vehicles running on CNG or LNG will be permitted entry.
- Sonipat has been added to the list of high-vehicle-density districts alongside Gurugram, Faridabad, Ghaziabad, and Gautam Buddha Nagar, where BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel light motor vehicles are banned under Stage 3.
- Exemptions for non-BS-VI compliant diesel-operated medium and light goods vehicles carrying essential goods or services have been revoked under Stage 3 restrictions.
- Pothole repair work has been added as a permitted exception during Stage 3 bans on construction and demolition activities, while differently-abled commuters retain exemptions to operate specialized BS-III petrol and BS-IV diesel personal vehicles.

Essential Definitions

- **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP):** An emergency response mechanism comprising four pollution-stage categories (Moderate to Poor, Very Poor, Severe, and Severe Plus) that trigger progressive vehicular, industrial, and construction restrictions in Delhi-NCR based on air quality conditions.

- **Bharat Stage (BS) Standards:** National emission benchmarks regulated by the government to control pollutant outputs from internal combustion engines, where BS-VI represents tighter emission limits compared to BS-IV and BS-III.
- **CAQM (Commission for Air Quality Management):** A statutory body established to ensure better coordination, research, identification, and resolution of problems surrounding air quality in the National Capital Region and adjoining areas.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 21 of the Indian Constitution:** Encompasses the fundamental right to clean air, a pollution-free environment, and public health, as affirmed by the Supreme Court of India in landmark environmental jurisprudence.
- **Article 48A (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Mandates that the State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and safeguard the forests and wildlife of the country.
- **Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Act, 2021:** The governing statutory framework granting CAQM broad regulatory powers to enforce binding anti-pollution directives over Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.



Conclusion The removal of Blanket exemptions for non-compliant essential transport under the updated GRAP framework signals a decisive regulatory posture by CAQM toward urban environmental governance. Prioritizing air quality standards alongside calibrated exceptions for essential infrastructure repair and accessibility ensures a structured mechanism to mitigate severe seasonal smog without compromising public safety.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Polity):** Institutional functioning of statutory bodies like CAQM, inter-state coordination mechanisms, and environmental policy enforcement under public health mandates.
- **GS Paper III (Environment & Ecology):** Air pollution mitigation strategies, implementation of BS emission standards, environmental regulatory frameworks, and emergency response planning in urban ecosystems.

6. Supreme Court to Hear Challenge on CEC Decision-Making and Election Commission's Collective Authority

Key Highlights & Summary

- The Supreme Court agreed to hear a petition challenging the individual decision-making process of Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, arguing that the Constitution vests authority in the Election Commission as a collective body.

- The plea requests the Court to declare the nationwide Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls illegal and seeks primary records directly from the Election Commission.
- Internal dissents were reported, with Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi recording objections at least 14 times over decisions issued without their prior knowledge.
- Following the controversy, the Election Commission removed the SIR declaration requirement from Form 6 on its ECINet portal for States where the revision exercise has concluded.
- Senior counsel urged a three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant to expedite the hearing on the limits of individual executive powers within multi-member constitutional bodies.
- The dispute highlights growing concerns regarding institutional transparency, collegiality, and adherence to consensus-based governance within statutory electoral administration.

Essential Definitions

- **Collective Authority:** The principle that administrative and quasi-judicial decisions of a multi-member constitutional body must be made jointly or by majority consensus, rather than by a single presiding officer.
- **Special Intensive Revision (SIR):** A comprehensive house-to-house verification exercise conducted by the Election Commission to update electoral rolls, verify voter credentials, and eliminate duplicate entries.
- **Form 6:** The statutory application form prescribed under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, used by citizens for inclusion of name in the electoral roll.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 324 of the Indian Constitution:** Vests the superintendence, direction, and control of elections in an Election Commission comprising the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners as determined by the President.
- **Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Conditions of Service) Act, 2023:** Mandates that business of the Commission shall be transacted unanimously, or by majority vote in case of a difference of opinion among members.
- **Registration of Electors Rules, 1960:** Regulates the statutory procedures and official forms utilized for preparation, revision, and publication of electoral rolls.

Conclusion The judicial examination of the Election Commission's decision-making architecture touches upon fundamental principles of institutional integrity and administrative fairness. Ensuring that multi-member constitutional bodies function through collective consultation safeguards internal checks and balances, preserving public trust in democratic electoral processes.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Structure, organization, and functioning of Constitutional Bodies (Election Commission of India), role of Chief Election Commissioner versus Election Commissioners, and statutory mechanisms for electoral reforms.
- **GS Paper II (Electoral Dynamics):** Electoral roll management, transparency in electoral administration, and judicial review of constitutional authorities.

7. US-China Strategic Competition: India's Imperative to De-Risk and Diversify

Key Highlights & Summary

- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar stated that the US and China are in a systemic "competitive mode", compelling nations like India to "de-risk" and "diversify" to protect national interests.
- Speaking at the Asia Society Policy Institute in New York, the Minister highlighted that global supply chain disruptions necessitate economic hedging in a fragmented international order.
- On Indo-US bilateral ties, Jaishankar cautioned that if Washington does not appreciate New Delhi's security concerns regarding Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, it could impact strategic partnership dynamics.
- Global governance consensus remains elusive as major powers fail to agree on global issues, prompting middle powers to build resilient supply networks.
- India's foreign policy continues to emphasize Strategic Autonomy, maintaining balanced engagements across multiple geopolitical groupings while prioritizing national security.
- Economic diversification strategies, such as critical technology corridors and local supply resilience, are vital to insulating emerging economies from great-power friction.



External Affairs Minister
S Jaishankar at Asia Society
Policy Institute in New York. ANI

E. EXPLAINED

Shifting landscape

At a time when conflicts have roiled economies and disrupted supply chains, the US and China are competing and because they cannot agree globally, the rest of the world needs to de-risk, diversify to survive in a fragmented order.

Essential Definitions

- **De-risking:** A geo-economic strategy aimed at reducing over-reliance on a single nation for critical trade and supply chains without completely decoupling economic ties.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** The capacity of a nation to pursue its sovereign national interests and foreign policy decisions independently without being constrained by allied power blocs.
- **Supply Chain Resilience:** The structural ability of an economic system to withstand, absorb, and rapidly recover from global disruptions or geopolitical shocks.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Mandates the State to promote international peace, security, just and honorable relations between nations, and respect for international law.
- **Article 73 of the Indian Constitution:** Vests executive power in the Union to navigate foreign affairs, negotiate international agreements, and safeguard sovereign national security interests.

- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Provides the statutory basis for formulating national trade policies, regulating imports/exports, and executing supply chain diversification directives.

Conclusion As intensifying power rivalry between the US and China fragments the multilateral order, India's pragmatic emphasis on de-risking and supply chain diversification safeguards its strategic leverage. Balancing bilateral alliances with clear red lines on cross-border security ensures that New Delhi maintains independence while fostering resilient trade partnerships.

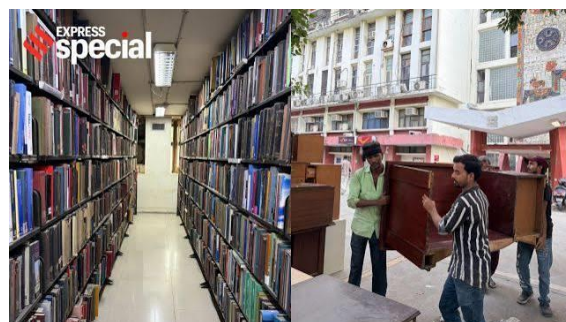
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India, effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's interests, and Indian Diaspora/Foreign Policy dynamics.
- **GS Paper III (Economy & Security):** Supply chain resilience, impact of global trade disruptions on national economy, and security challenges in border regions.

8. Preservation Challenge of Central Secretariat Library Under Central Vista Project

Key Highlights & Summary

- The 135-year-old Central Secretariat Library (CSL), housing over 8.5 lakh books and rare government records, faces spatial relocation challenges as Shastri Bhawan is slated for demolition under the Central Vista revamp project.
- Originally established in 1891 as the Imperial Secretariat Library in Kolkata, CSL shifted to Delhi in 1911 and has functioned from Shastri Bhawan since 1969.
- It stands as the second-largest Central Government library in India after the National Library in Kolkata, holding rare historical gazetteers, government reports, and manuscripts dating back to 1702.
- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) allotted a 300 sq m space (two rooms) at Kartavya Bhawan-2, which was rejected by the Ministry of Culture as severely inadequate for the library's vast collection.
- The issue mirrors earlier infrastructural dislodgements, such as the disbanding of CSL's Tulsi Sadan section for metro construction, leaving over two lakh books stored in cardboard cartons for 15 years.
- The Ministry of Culture has requested space equivalent to its original footprint (approx. 5,500 sq m spread over four floors) within the revamped Central Vista complex to preserve national documentary heritage.



Essential Definitions

- **Central Secretariat Library (CSL):** A premier repository of government records, official documents, rare books, and gazetteers functioning under the Ministry of Culture to serve government departments, researchers, and public scholars.

- **Documentary Heritage:** Archival records, rare publications, historical manuscripts, and official gazettes that represent the institutional and cultural memory of a nation.
- **Central Vista Redevelopment Project:** An ongoing infrastructure project aimed at redeveloping India's central administrative area in New Delhi, including new government secretariat buildings (Kartavya Bhawan).

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 49 of the Indian Constitution (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Obligates the State to protect monuments, places, and objects of artistic or historic interest from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, or disposal.
- **Public Records Act, 1993:** Regulates the management, administration, and preservation of public records of the Central Government and Union Territory administrations.
- **Delivery of Books and Newspapers (Public Libraries) Act, 1954:** Formulates the legal mandate for deposit, preservation, and public access to national literature across designated public and central repositories.

Conclusion The spatial crisis confronting the Central Secretariat Library highlights the essential balance required between modern urban infrastructure development and the preservation of tangible documentary heritage. Ensuring adequate, specialized space within public administration frameworks is crucial to safeguarding historic knowledge archives and preventing institutional memory loss.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I (Indian Culture & Heritage):** Protection and preservation of national monuments, historical records, literary heritage, and archival institutions.
- **GS Paper II (Governance & Administration):** Inter-ministerial coordination (Ministry of Culture vs. MoHUA), public infrastructure policy, and preservation of public administrative records.

Inauguration of Barapullah Phase III Flyover and Key Urban Infrastructure Projects in Delhi

Key Highlights & Summary

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah inaugurated the long-pending Barapullah Phase III elevated corridor, built at an estimated cost of ₹1,635 crore to seamlessly connect East and South Delhi.
- The 3.5-km-long, 6-lane elevated corridor provides signal-free connectivity between Mayur Vihar Phase I, Sarai Kale Khan, and South Delhi, completing a total stretch of 10.9 km with nine loops.
- Approved in 2014 with construction starting in 2015, the project faced significant delays and cost escalations due to land acquisition challenges, environmental clearances for tree felling, and high-tension line relocations.
- The infrastructure development package includes the newly inaugurated Mukarba Chowk Underpass (₹43 crore), designed to streamline daily traffic for around 15,800 vehicles.
- Foundation stones were laid for two additional transit projects: the Loni Road Underpass (₹54.59 crore) and the Modi Mill-Savitri Cinema Flyover (₹209 crore) on Outer Ring Road.

- The projects are tailored to decongest critical arterial bottlenecks, reduce transit times, lower vehicular emissions, and incorporate dedicated non-motorized transport facilities for pedestrians and cyclists.

Essential Definitions

- **Signal-Free Corridor:** A continuous urban arterial roadway designed without traffic intersections or stoplights, utilizing flyovers and underpasses to maintain uninterrupted traffic flow.
- **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):** An urban planning strategy that integrates land use and transport infrastructure to maximize access to public transport and non-motorized transit.
- **Non-Motorized Transport (NMT):** Modes of travel that rely on human power, such as walking and bicycling, supported by dedicated lanes and footpaths.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 243ZE of the Indian Constitution:** Mandates the constitution of a Metropolitan Planning Committee to draft development plans for metropolitan regions, ensuring coordinated infrastructure planning.
- **National Urban Transport Policy (NUTP), 2006:** Emphasizes prioritizing sustainable, efficient, and accessible urban transit systems over private vehicular space.
- **Delhi Urban Art Commission (DUAC) Act, 1973:** Provides the statutory oversight required to maintain environmental, architectural, and aesthetic standards in major municipal infrastructure projects.

Conclusion The completion of the Barapullah Phase III corridor highlights the vital role of integrated urban mobility in resolving long-standing municipal congestion. Addressing inter-agency coordination hurdles and land acquisition delays remains crucial for executing major public infrastructure projects on schedule without cost overruns.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I (Society & Urbanization):** Urbanization issues, infrastructure development, urban mobility, and socio-economic consequences of spatial connectivity.
- **GS Paper III (Infrastructure & Economy):** Transport infrastructure (roads, bridges, flyovers), capital expenditure, project execution bottlenecks, and sustainable urban transport planning.

9. Uttarakhand's First Glacial Lake Early-Warning System at Vasundhara Tal, Chamoli

Key Highlights & Summary

- Uttarakhand initiated the installation of its first real-time glacial lake early-warning system at Vasundhara Tal in Chamoli district to mitigate Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) risks.
- A joint scientific team from the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI) and the Wadia Institute of Himalayan Geology is leading the operation, supported by SDRF, NDRF, and ITBP.

- Out of 344 glacial lakes identified in the state by the National Remote Sensing Centre in 2023, 13 are classified as high-risk by NDMA, with Vasundhara Tal under Category A (highest risk).
- Bathymetric surveys measuring lake length, width, terrain, depth, and water-holding capacity have already been completed across six high-risk glacial lakes in the region.
- The monitoring setup includes water-level sensors, automatic weather stations, snow-depth/sub-surface temperature sensors, and solar-powered tilt/accelerometer sensors to detect movements and vibrations.
- Satellite phones and low-Earth-orbit communication devices are deployed to maintain continuous telemetry and data transmission from high-altitude Himalayan terrain to USDMA.

Essential Definitions

- **Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF):** A sudden release of water from a glacial lake dammed by unstable moraine or ice, often triggered by avalanches, earthquakes, or rapid melting, causing downstream destruction.
- **Bathymetric Survey:** The scientific measurement and mapping of the depth, topography, and underwater features of water bodies such as glacial lakes to estimate total water storage capacity.
- **Category A Glacial Lakes:** High-altitude glacial water bodies designated by disaster management authorities as possessing the highest vulnerability to structural breaching and immediate downstream hazard potential.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Provides the statutory basis for the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) to establish early-warning infrastructure and risk reduction measures.
- **Article 21 of the Indian Constitution:** Guarantees the fundamental Right to Life, which includes environmental security, safety from natural hazards, and state protection against preventable disasters.
- **National Guidelines on Management of GLOFs (NDMA):** Outlines specific protocols for monitoring high-altitude lakes, conducting risk mapping, installing automated telemetry systems, and building local community response capacity.

Conclusion The deployment of real-time early-warning systems at Vasundhara Tal marks a critical advancement in climate adaptation and proactive Himalayan disaster management. Translating high-altitude sensor data into timely, actionable downstream alerts remains key to safeguarding vulnerable mountain communities and critical infrastructure against climate-induced disasters.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Disaster Management & Environment):** Glacial hazards (GLOFs), disaster risk reduction strategies, early-warning mechanisms, and climate change impacts on Himalayan ecology.

- **GS Paper III (Science & Technology):** Application of remote sensing, automated sensor networks, and satellite communication in environmental monitoring and hazard management.

10. Ghosts of 1945 in US-China Geopolitics and India's Historical Role

Key Highlights & Summary

- US President Donald Trump and Chinese President Xi Jinping invoked World War II history, leveraging the 1945 wartime alliance to project current great-power dynamics in Asia.
- Beijing uses narrative diplomacy to frame itself as a victorious power of 1945, seeking to weaken the post-war San Francisco System of US alliances and delegitimize Japan's defense modernization.
- Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi sought political reassurances from the US, as Tokyo faces pressure from Beijing's attempts to position Japan as a defeated aggressor.
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar highlighted the "historical injustice" where India's critical contribution of 2.3 million soldiers and 14 million industrial workers in WWII was overlooked during post-war order creation.
- Domestic political divisions during WWII, including the Quit India Movement and the Indian National Army, hindered India from articulating a unified post-war claim in global governance frameworks.
- The strategic debate underscores how historical narratives of 1945 continue to be weaponized by major powers to reshape modern Asian security architecture.

Essential Definitions

- **San Francisco System:** The post-World War II security architecture established in 1951 through hub-and-spoke bilateral alliances between the US and Asian allies, with Japan at its core.
- **Yalta System:** The post-WWII geopolitical order crafted by major allied powers that established spheres of influence across Europe and Asia, shaping the early Cold War balance.
- **Narrative Diplomacy:** The strategic leverage of historical interpretations, wartime contributions, and collective memory to justify contemporary foreign policy and security objectives.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **UN Charter Articles 53 and 107 ("Enemy State" Clauses):** Outdated provisions referencing World War II aggressors (Japan, Germany, Italy), which Beijing seeks to keep active to put Japan on the defensive, despite UN consensus on their obsolete nature.
- **Article 51 of the Indian Constitution:** Directs the State to promote international peace, security, and maintain just and honorable relations between nations.
- **UN Charter Article 108:** Governs the amendment procedures of the United Nations Charter, relevant to reforming the UN Security Council to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities rather than 1945 power distributions.

Conclusion The revival of 1945 wartime narratives by the US and China reflects a deeper contest over leadership in the Indo-Pacific. For India, correcting historical oversights regarding its massive contribution to WWII is vital for securing a rightful position in modern global governance and resisting historical revisions that undermine regional balance.

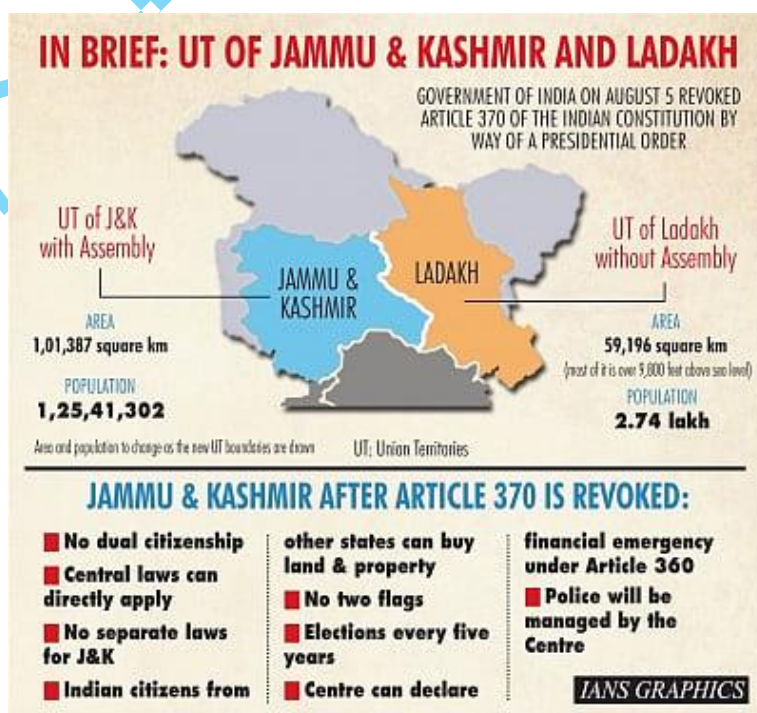
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper I (World History & Indian History):** World War II dynamics, Indian national movement during WWII, Quit India Movement, and role of the Indian National Army.
- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** US-China strategic contestation, Indo-Pacific security architecture, post-WWII multilateral order, and UN Security Council reforms.

11. J&K's Evolving Status: From Article 370 to Union Territory

Key Highlights & Summary

- Jammu & Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah introduced a resolution in the Legislative Assembly seeking the immediate restoration of statehood to J&K.
- Amendments moved by several members brought focus to the former constitutional provisions of Article 370 and Article 35A that existed prior to August 5, 2019.
- Article 370 originally granted special autonomous status to J&K, limiting Parliament's initial legislative powers over the state to defense, foreign affairs, and communications as per the Instrument of Accession.
- The Delhi Agreement of 1952 further defined center-state relations, expanding Supreme Court jurisdiction and Emergency powers to the state while permitting a separate state flag.
- Article 35A, added via a 1954 Presidential Order, empowered the state assembly to define "permanent residents" and accord them exclusive rights to land acquisition and public employment.
- On August 5, 2019, the Central Government utilized Clause 3 of Article 370 via the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019, to render Article 370 inoperative and reorganize the state into two Union Territories.



Essential Definitions

- **Instrument of Accession:** The legal document executed by Maharaja Hari Singh on October 26, 1947, acceding the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir to the Dominion of India.

- **Permanent Resident Certificate (PRC):** A legal designation under the former Article 35A conferring exclusive privileges regarding land ownership, state government jobs, and scholarships within J&K.
- **Constituent Assembly of J&K:** The body elected in 1951 to frame the state constitution of Jammu and Kashmir, which dissolved itself in 1957 without recommending the abrogation of Article 370.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 370 of the Indian Constitution:** Provided temporary provisions regarding Jammu and Kashmir, allowing the state to adopt its own constitution and limiting Union legislative powers.
- **Article 367 (Interpretation):** Modified in 2019 to substitute the term "Constituent Assembly of the State" in Article 370(3) with "Legislative Assembly of the State" to facilitate constitutional changes.
- **Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019:** The parliamentary legislation that bifurcated the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories—Jammu & Kashmir (with a legislature) and Ladakh (without a legislature).

Conclusion The evolving political and constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir reflects a historic shift from asymmetric federalism to complete constitutional integration with the Indian Union. Current discussions in the state assembly center on balancing regional autonomy aspirations and legislative privileges with national integration through the restoration of statehood.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity & Governance):** Indian Constitution (historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments), Asymmetric Federalism, Center-State relations, and reorganisation of states under Articles 2 and 3.
- **GS Paper II (Governance & Constitutional Bodies):** Constitutional validity of executive orders, presidential powers under Article 370, and judicial interpretation of constitutional amendments.

12. Sulphur Price Surge: Impact of Geopolitical Conflicts and Green Transition

Key Highlights & Summary

- International sulphur prices escalated nearly four-fold, rising from \$280 per tonne in July 2025 to \$1,050 per tonne in July 2026, creating a severe import burden for consumer nations.
- Approximately 92% of global sulphur supply is produced as a secondary by-product of petroleum refining and natural gas processing, leaving output highly dependent on hydrocarbon supply chains.
- Geopolitical shocks in key refining regions—including Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian refineries and escalating conflict in West Asia—caused major export restrictions and seaborne supply disruptions.

- China, Russia, and major West Asian producers restricted sulphur and sulphuric acid exports to prioritize domestic agricultural and industrial needs.
- India, despite producing 3.7 MMT of sulphur, relies heavily on imports (2.25 MMT in 2025), with over 90% sourced from West Asia to support its domestic fertilizer sector.
- Beyond traditional fertilizer usage, structural demand is rising due to clean energy transitions, as sulphuric acid is heavily utilized in High-Pressure Acid Leach (HPAL) processing of nickel for electric vehicle (EV) batteries.

Essential Definitions

- **By-Product Commodity:** A secondary product derived from a manufacturing process or chemical reaction, such as elementary sulphur recovered during oil and natural gas desulfurization.
- **High-Pressure Acid Leach (HPAL):** An industrial hydrometallurgical extraction process that uses high temperature, pressure, and concentrated sulphuric acid to extract nickel and cobalt from low-grade laterite ores.
- **Structural Deficit:** An ongoing market condition where long-term global consumption continuously exceeds total supply capacity regardless of seasonal fluctuations.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 307 of the Indian Constitution:** Authorizes Parliament to appoint an authority to regulate inter-state trade and commerce, relevant to managing domestic distribution of essential agricultural inputs.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Empowers the Union Government to declare fertilizers as essential commodities to control production, supply, distribution, and pricing against global price volatility.
- **Fertiliser (Control) Order, 1985:** Promulgated under the Essential Commodities Act to regulate the quality, price, and movement of fertilizers (including sulphur-based nutrients) across India.

Conclusion The unprecedented surge in global sulphur prices underscores the vulnerability of critical industrial inputs to geopolitical conflict and energy transition demands. Enhancing domestic desulfurization efficiency, expanding strategic reserves, and diversifying mineral processing pathways remain vital to protecting national food security and supporting clean energy manufacturing.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Economy & Agriculture):** Supply chain vulnerabilities in the fertilizer sector, import dependencies, input subsidy burdens, and industrial raw material management.
- **GS Paper III (Environment & Energy):** Critical mineral supply chains, EV battery manufacturing infrastructure, and environmental impacts of hydrometallurgical processing.

Dr. GINDI'S IAS ACADEMY