

**The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC
CSE**

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Page 01 : GS 3 : Indian Economy / Prelims

The United States has signalled a possible imposition of additional tariffs on Indian rice, following President Donald Trump's remarks accusing India and other Asian exporters of "dumping" rice in the U.S. market. This development comes ahead of scheduled U.S.-India trade negotiations in New Delhi. While such measures appear politically driven, a review of bilateral trade data shows a potential asymmetry in impact, with the U.S. likely to face more adverse consequences than India.

Why the Issue Arose

The U.S. farm lobby raised concerns about imported rice depressing domestic prices.

President Trump responded by questioning why Indian rice allegedly receives tariff exemptions and suggested that "tariffs can solve this quickly."

This statement coincides with a U.S. domestic farm relief package—indicating electoral calculus and populist signalling.

Trade Data: Why Tariffs May Hurt the U.S. More

1. India's Low Dependence on U.S. as a Rice Market

India exported \$391.74 million worth of rice to the U.S. in 2023-24.

This is only 3.1% of India's total rice exports.

India has a highly diversified export base with shipments going to 179 countries.

2. U.S. High Dependence on India for Rice Imports

The U.S. imported \$1.6 billion worth of rice in 2024.

India accounted for 26% of total U.S. rice imports—making it a major source.

Any tariff hike would likely raise rice prices in the U.S., affecting consumers and food processors.

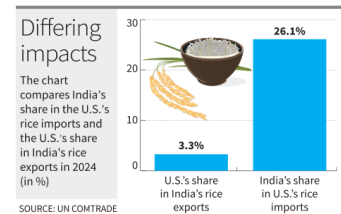
3. Limited Evidence of 'Dumping'

Indian rice exports operate under competitive market pricing, not under government subsidies that distort trade.

Dumping allegations appear unsubstantiated and driven more by political rhetoric.

Strategic and Economic Implications

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Trump mulls tariffs on Indian rice; move may affect U.S. more

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Days before a U.S. team of negotiators is to visit India to discuss tariffs, U.S. President Donald Trump has hinted at imposing further tariffs on India, this time on rice, to prevent it from "dumping" rice in the U.S.

However, an analysis of trade data between the two countries shows that such tariffs would hurt the U.S. far more than India since only about 3% of India's rice exports go to the U.S., whereas Indian rice makes up more than one-fourth of the quantity imported into the U.S.

In other words, for rice, the U.S. is not a major export destination for India, but India is a major import source for the U.S.

The Hindu had recently reported that a U.S. team of negotiators led by Deputy U.S. Trade Representative Rick Switzer would be in New Delhi on December 10-12 to discuss tariffs with the Indian side. The U.S. has currently imposed a total of 50% tariffs on imports from India.

At a meeting in the White House, when a farmers' representative complained that India, Thailand and other countries were "dumping" rice in the

U.S., Mr. Trump asked the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent: "Why is India allowed to do that? They have to pay tariffs. Do they have an exemption on rice?"

Later, he said the issue can be solved "so quickly with tariffs" on these countries that are "illegally shipping" into the U.S.

Global reach

According to data with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, India exported rice worth \$391.74 million to the U.S. in 2023-24, which makes up about 3.1% of India's total rice shipments.

India exports rice to 179 other countries.

On the other hand, data from the World Integrated Trade Solutions website shows India accounted for about 26% of the \$1.6 billion worth of rice the U.S. imported in 2024.

President Trump's threat on December 8 to impose new tariffs on Indian rice, announced alongside a U.S. farm relief package, looks driven more by domestic politics than by trade logic," Ajay Srivastava, founder of think tank Global Trade Research Initiative, and former Director General of Foreign Trade said.

Daily News Analysis

1. Domestic Political Signalling in the U.S.

Trump's statement coincides with farmer outreach measures.

Tariffs create an impression of protectionism favourable to rural voter bases.

2. Bilateral Trade Negotiations Could Become More Complex

The U.S. has already imposed 50% tariffs on various Indian exports.

Additional steps may strain ongoing dialogue on market access and tariff rationalisation.

3. Limited Impact on India's Export Economy

India's rice export ecosystem is global; diversion of shipments to other markets is feasible.

Thus, the economic burden of U.S. tariffs would be negligible for India.

4. Possible Price Inflation in the U.S.

Reduced Indian imports may require sourcing from costlier suppliers.

This could escalate consumer food inflation—an undesirable outcome for the U.S. administration.

5. Signal for Wider Protectionist Trends

The U.S. under Trump has historically used tariffs as coercive economic tools.

The escalation here may foreshadow renewed trade frictions with multiple countries.

Conclusion

President Trump's threat to impose tariffs on Indian rice appears to be driven largely by domestic political considerations rather than grounded trade evidence. Given India's minimal reliance on the U.S. market and the U.S.'s significant dependence on Indian rice imports, the economic costs of such tariffs would disproportionately hurt the U.S. consumer market. For India, the move is unlikely to have notable macroeconomic impact but may complicate ongoing bilateral trade negotiations. The episode once again highlights the growing use of protectionism in global trade policy and the need for stable, rules-based economic engagement.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: In the context of trade policy, “dumping” refers to:

- a) Exporting goods at prices lower than domestic support prices.
- b) Exporting goods at prices lower than the cost of production or market value.
- c) Exporting excessive quantities of goods beyond quota limits.
- d) Imposing tariffs to restrict imports.

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Despite being a major supplier of rice to the United States, India's exposure to the U.S. rice market remains low. Analyse this asymmetry in trade dependence and explain its implications for India's export resilience. **(150 Words)**

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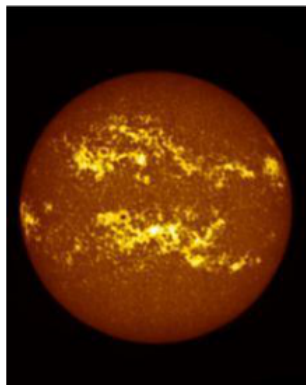
In a significant advancement for heliophysics, India's first solar observatory Aditya-L1, working in coordination with six U.S. satellites, has explained why the May 2024 solar storm (Gannon's storm) displayed unusually strong behaviour. The study revealed a rare magnetic phenomenon inside a coronal mass ejection (CME), substantially advancing global efforts to understand how solar storms evolve and impact Earth's technological infrastructure. This achievement strengthens India's standing in space-based space-weather research.

Aditya-L1 joins global effort revealing why the 2024 solar storm behaved unusually

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

India's first solar observatory Aditya-L1, along with six U.S. satellites, in a major breakthrough, has revealed why the May 2024 solar storm also known as Gannon's storm behaved so unusually.

The solar storm is composed of a series of giant explosions on the Sun, called coronal mass ejections (CMEs). CMEs are like massive bubbles of hot gas and magnetic energy thrown out from the Sun into space. When these bubbles hit Earth, they can shake our planet's magnetic shield and cause serious trouble for satellites, communication systems, GPS,



The images of the Sun captured by Aditya-L1 during May solar storm, released by the ISRO.

and even power grids.

According to the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), during the May 2024 solar storm, the Sun's magnetic fields, which are like twisted ropes inside a solar storm, were breaking

and rejoining within the storm.

"Usually, a CME carries a twisted "magnetic rope" that interacts with Earth's magnetic shield as it approaches Earth. But this time, two CMEs collided in space and squeezed each other so firmly that the magnetic field lines inside one of them snapped and rejoined in new ways, a process called magnetic reconnection," ISRO said. It added that this sudden reversal of the magnetic field made the storm's impact stronger than expected.

"At the heart of this discovery is India's first solar observatory, Aditya-L1, which joined forces with six U.S. satellites (NASA's Wind, ACE, THEMIS-C,

STEREO-A, MMS, and NASA-NOAA joint mission DSCOVR)," the ISRO said.

"Thanks to precise magnetic field measurements from India's Aditya-L1 mission, scientists were able to map this reconnection region. They found that the area where the CME's magnetic field was tearing and reconnecting was enormous – about 1.3 million km across, i.e., nearly 100 times the size of Earth. It was the first time such a giant magnetic breakup and rejoining had ever been seen inside a CME," it added.

This discovery is expected to enhance the understanding of how solar storms evolve as they travel from the Sun to Earth.

Background: What Made the 2024 Solar Storm Unusual?

Solar storms occur when the Sun ejects massive blobs of magnetised plasma, known as Coronal Mass Ejections (CMEs). When these CMEs strike Earth, they disturb the geomagnetic field, threatening:

Satellite operations

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GPS navigation

Radio communication

Power grid stability

The May 2024 storm was unexpectedly intense, causing stronger geomagnetic disturbances than forecasts predicted.

Key Discovery: Giant Magnetic Reconnection Inside the CME

1. CME–CME Collision

During the 2024 event, two CMEs collided in interplanetary space, compressing each other.

This collision altered their internal magnetic structure, an event rarely observed.

2. Magnetic Rope Disruption

Typically, a CME carries a twisted magnetic flux rope that interacts with Earth's magnetic field. This time:

The magnetic field lines snapped and rejoined (magnetic reconnection).

This reversal of magnetic polarity intensified the storm's impact on Earth.

3. Scale of the Reconnection Region

Data from Aditya-L1 revealed:

The reconnection region was 1.3 million km wide, nearly 100 times the size of Earth.

This is the first-ever observation of such a massive magnetic restructuring inside a CME.

Role of Aditya-L1 and International Collaboration

Aditya-L1 collaborated with:

NASA's WIND, ACE, MMS, THEMIS-C, STEREO-A

DSCOVR (NASA–NOAA)

Aditya-L1's Contribution

Provided precise magnetic field measurements using instruments like MAG and VELC.

Enabled accurate mapping of the reconnection zone.

Marked India's first major scientific output in global space-weather monitoring.

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This highlights India's rise as a contributor to international space-

weather science.

Significance of the Discovery

1. Advances Space-Weather Forecasting

Understanding magnetic reconnection inside CMEs allows better prediction of:

Storm arrival time

Storm strength

Impact intensity

This is vital for safeguarding modern infrastructure that depends heavily on satellites and electricity networks.

2. Strengthens India's Scientific Capabilities

Validates the scientific goals of Aditya-L1.

Enhances India's role in multi-agency monitoring of solar hazards.

Places India among key contributors to heliophysics research.

3. Helps Prepare for Extreme Solar Events

Rare phenomena like CME-CME coupling can lead to superstorms. Understanding their mechanisms can:

Improve early-warning systems

Support national security

Protect aviation, communication, and defence networks

4. Boost to Global Scientific Cooperation

The result demonstrates:

The increasing interdependence of space-weather research

Importance of data sharing

India's emergence as a reliable scientific partner

Conclusion

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Daily News Analysis

The Aditya-L1 mission's discovery of a giant magnetic reconnection inside the 2024 Gannon's solar storm marks a breakthrough in understanding how solar storms evolve during their journey toward Earth. By explaining the unusually strong geomagnetic impact, India has significantly contributed to global heliophysics research and improved the predictive capability of space-weather systems. This achievement reinforces India's growing leadership in space science and its capacity to contribute meaningfully to global scientific challenges.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : Magnetic reconnection, recently seen inside a CME, refers to:

- A. The fragmentation of solar wind particles due to high temperatures
- B. Sudden breaking and rejoining of magnetic field lines releasing large amounts of energy
- C. A reduction in the Sun's magnetic cycle activity
- D. The formation of sunspots due to intense magnetic fields

Ans : b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : What is magnetic reconnection? Examine its role in shaping the intensity of solar storms, with reference to the 2024 Gannon's storm.

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Page 04 : Prelims

The 19th edition of **Exercise SURYAKIRAN**, the annual bilateral military exercise between India and Nepal, concluded at Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand. The exercise is one of the longest-running military collaborations in South Asia and is central to India's neighbourhood-first approach and defence diplomacy. SURYAKIRAN-XIX focused on enhancing interoperability in counter-terrorism operations under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

SURYAKIRAN-XIX: India-Nepal Army exercise concludes in Uttarakhand

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The India-Nepal joint military exercise, SURYAKIRAN-XIX, concluded at Pithoragarh in Uttarakhand on Tuesday.

Marking the end of the intensive combined training cycle, the Directors-General of Military Operations (DGMOs) of the Indian and Nepal Armies jointly witnessed and validated a two-day battalion-level validation exercise at the Foreign Training Node in Pithoragarh.

The Indian Army said the validation phase showcased joint tactics, techniques and procedures for counter-terrorism operations mandated under



DGMO Lieutenant General Manish Luthra along with DGMO of Nepal Army, Major General Anup Jung Thapa. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

The drills featured a suite of cutting-edge technologies, including ISR (intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) and

precision-targeting drones, advanced day/night weapon sights, AI-enabled surveillance feeds, unmanned operational and logistics platforms, and secure battlefield communication

systems. The exercise underscored seamless interoperability, synchronised mission planning and coordinated execution of combined tactical operations in a counter-terrorism environment across battalion, company and small-team levels. Troops carried out intelligence-based surgical missions in complex terrain, employing aerial insertion methods to strengthen rapid-response capability.

Reinforcing ties

As a mark of this enduring partnership, the DGMOs jointly planted a Tree of Friendship, reaffirming the timeless bonds and strategic cooperation between India and Nepal.

Key Highlights of SURYAKIRAN-XIX

1. High-Level Validation

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Daily News Analysis

The **Directors-General of Military Operations (DGMOs)** of both armies — **Lt. Gen. Manish Luthra (India)** and **Maj. Gen. Anup Jung Thapa (Nepal)** — jointly reviewed a two-day battalion-level validation exercise.

Their presence reflects the strategic weight and political commitment attached to India–Nepal defence cooperation.

2. Training Focus: Counter-Terrorism Under UN Mandates

The drills were designed around **UN Chapter VII** operations, emphasising:

Joint tactics and procedures

Peace enforcement

Counter-terrorism in hostile environments

This aligns with India and Nepal's strong participation in **UN Peacekeeping Missions**.

Technologies and Capabilities Demonstrated

The exercise featured several advanced military platforms, highlighting the modernisation of both forces.

Cutting-edge systems used:

ISR platforms: Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance

Precision-targeting drones

Advanced day/night weapon sights

AI-enabled surveillance feeds

Unmanned operational and logistics vehicles

Secure battlefield communication systems

These systems support **network-centric warfare**, situational awareness, and rapid response capabilities.

Operational Techniques Practised

Intelligence-based **surgical missions**

Joint planning at battalion, company, and small-team levels

Aerial insertion methods for rapid deployment in difficult terrain

Coordinated execution of combined tactical operations

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These drills strengthen **interoperability, tactical cohesion**, and

mission synchronisation.

Strategic Significance for India–Nepal Relations

1. Reinforcing Defence Diplomacy

SURYAKIRAN is a key pillar of military-to-military engagement between the two countries.

It supports India's broader strategic aim of maintaining stable and cooperative ties with Nepal, especially amid external influence in the region.

2. Enhancing Border Security

India and Nepal share an open border.

Joint training helps both forces manage:

Cross-border movement

Trafficking networks

Terrorism-related threats

Disaster response cooperation in the Himalayan zone

3. Strengthening People-to-People and Regimental Linkages

Thousands of Gorkha soldiers serve in the Indian Army.

Joint exercises further deepen this traditional bond.

4. Symbolic Diplomacy

Planting the **"Tree of Friendship"** by both DGMOs reflects long-standing cultural, military, and civilisational relations.

Conclusion

Exercise SURYAKIRAN-XIX demonstrates the enduring strategic partnership between India and Nepal. By focusing on counter-terrorism, UN peace operations, and advanced battlefield technologies, the exercise enhances interoperability and readiness of both armies. More broadly, it reinforces India's neighbourhood-first policy, consolidates defence diplomacy, and strengthens regional stability in the Himalayas. The symbolic "Tree of Friendship" stands as a reminder of the deep-rooted and evolving cooperation between the two nations.

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UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Q1. Consider the following statements regarding Exercise SURYAKIRAN:

1. It is a bilateral military exercise between India and Nepal.
2. The 2024 edition focused on counter-terrorism operations under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.
3. SURYAKIRAN-XIX was conducted at the Foreign Training Node in Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand.
4. Only Indian forces participate; Nepal contributes observers but not troops.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1, 2 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 4 only
- D. 1, 3 and 4 only

Ans : b)

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Page 06 : GS 2 : Governance

A working paper released by a committee under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has proposed that Large Language Models (LLMs) be allowed default access to all freely available online content for training purposes. Instead of permitting publishers to opt out of data mining, the committee suggests establishing a copyright-society-like non-profit that will collect and distribute royalties to content creators. This recommendation seeks to balance innovation in AI with the copyright concerns of publishers, at a time when AI training practices face litigation and global regulatory uncertainty.

Ensure free content access for LLMs, says working paper

It says data crawlers for training artificial intelligence models should not be restricted; instead a copyright society should be set up to collect royalties for members and non-members of body

Aroon Deep
NEW DELHI

A government working paper released on Monday suggested that AI large language models (LLMs) such as ChatGPT should, by default, have access to content freely available online, and that publishers should not have an opt-out mechanism for such content.

Instead, a copyright society-like non-profit should be set up to collect royalties for both members and non-members of that body.

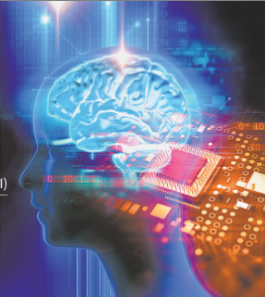
The working paper, authored by a committee formed by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), is not final, and is accepting public comments for 30 days. The document is one of the main indicators of how the Indian government is thinking of balancing copyright holders' fears that AI systems will regurgitate content they invested in without remuneration, and the interests of LLM developers who have routinely consumed massive amounts of data online to train their models.

Nasscom, which was represented in the DPIIT's

LLMs and copyright

A committee formed by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) is accepting public comments on a working paper for 30 days

- The core proposal suggests that LLMs should be allowed to freely access all publicly available online content
- A royalty system has been recommended instead of restrictions
- However, publishers are already concerned about AI regurgitating content. Some are already suing AI firms (e.g., DNPA vs OpenAI)
- There may be pushback from AI firms over the cost burden, while publishers may resist flat royalty distribution



committee, dissented, arguing that forced royalties would amount to a "tax on innovation", and said that "mining" or scraping the Web for data must be allowed for freely available content without paywalls, and that both "crawlable" and access-restricted content providers should have options to "reserve" their content from being mined for LLM development.

Opt-out not feasible

The committee rejected Nasscom's dissent, arguing that small content creators may not have the means to actually enforce such opt-outs.

The Digital News Publishers Association, which represents traditional news media outlets with

a digital presence, including *The Hindu*, has sued ChatGPT maker OpenAI in the Delhi High Court for copyright infringement. OpenAI denies the allegations. The working paper argues that it may not be prudent to await the outcome of this and other similar litigation.

The recommendations, if put in place through a law, will eliminate any allegations of improper access to data, by blessing all access, provided a fee is paid. This model is similar to the "compulsory licensing" framework in place for radio stations in India, which are empowered to play music without negotiating rights for them, as long as a statutorily prescribed fee is paid to the rights holders.

This balancing may face pushback from AI developers and content creators; the former may argue against anything that increases development costs as few AI firms are even profitable at the moment, leaving little appetite to share revenues. Content creators may resist a flat fee if they feel their inputs are more valuable in training a model than those of other royalty recipients.

A payout to the copyright society set up for distributing AI riches to content creators, will be distributed by considering factors such as Web traffic and social indicators, like how respectable a publisher is. Any decision can be taken to the court, the working group says.

Key Features of the Working Paper

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1. Default Free Access to Online Content

LLMs (e.g., ChatGPT) should not require permission to crawl or scrape publicly available web content.

No opt-out mechanism for publishers.

2. Royalty Collection Model

A non-profit copyright society will:

Collect royalties from AI developers.

Distribute payment to both members and non-members.

Operate similar to compulsory licensing used in radio broadcasting.

3. Policy Motivation

India needs a clear and enabling regulatory framework for AI innovation.

Litigation on copyright (such as DNPA vs. OpenAI) should not stall policy progress.

4. Public Consultation

The paper is open for comments for 30 days; final recommendations may evolve after stakeholder inputs.

Dissent and Counterarguments

Nasscom's Objections

Forced royalty payments = "tax on innovation", increasing development cost.

Both free and paywalled content providers should have the choice to "reserve" their content from AI mining.

Innovation-friendly policy requires unrestricted access to free content without mandatory fees.

Committee's Response

Opt-outs are impractical, especially for small content creators lacking technical capacity.

A unified royalty mechanism ensures:

Equity

Administrative simplicity

Legal clarity

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Daily News Analysis

Eliminates future claims of unlawful data access if royalties are

paid.

Legal and Regulatory Context

1. Ongoing Copyright Litigation

DNPA (Digital News Publishers Association) has sued OpenAI for copyright infringement.

Several global publishers have taken similar legal steps.

2. International Trends

EU AI Act allows data mining unless content owners opt out.

U.S. jurisprudence still evolving (fair use debate).

India exploring a middle ground: controlled access + compensation.

3. Compulsory Licensing Analogy

Radio stations in India can play any copyrighted music once statutory royalty is paid.

DPIIT proposes a similar statutory safe harbour for AI training datasets.

Potential Benefits of the Proposed Model

For AI Developers

Clear legal access to training data.

Reduced risk of copyright lawsuits.

Predictable compliance framework.

For Content Creators

Guaranteed royalty revenue from AI companies.

Protection from unremunerated use of their work.

Opportunity for recognition in a rapidly changing digital ecosystem.

For India's AI Ecosystem

Encourages LLM development within India.

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Daily News Analysis

Reduces reliance on foreign AI models.

Aligns with India's goal of becoming a global AI innovation hub.

Challenges and Criticisms

1. Cost Burden on AI Developers

Most AI companies are not yet profitable.

Mandatory royalty payments may disincentivise startups.

2. Discontent Among Publishers

Flat or algorithmic royalty allocation may not reflect actual value of contribution.

Large publishers may demand a differentiated royalty structure.

3. Complexity of Distribution

Metrics such as web traffic, publisher reputation, and content volume may be contested.

Disputes may require judicial intervention, slowing implementation.

4. No Opt-Out Option

Some creators may fundamentally oppose data mining of their content for AI.

Eliminating opt-out might raise ethical concerns about consent and autonomy.

Conclusion

The DPIIT working paper represents a bold step in shaping India's approach to AI governance, seeking to balance innovation, copyright protection, and public interest. By proposing a compulsory-licensing-like model with royalty distribution, the government aims to eliminate ambiguity around AI data access while ensuring equitable compensation for content creators. However, the recommendations are likely to face strong pushback from both AI developers (over cost burdens) and publishers (over valuation of contributions). The policy's effectiveness will depend on robust stakeholder consultation and careful design of the royalty distribution framework.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : The DPIIT working paper on LLMs attempts to create a balance between AI innovation and copyright protection, but raises significant regulatory and ethical concerns. Discuss. **(250 Words)**

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Page 09 : GS 2 : Indian Polity

The Election Commission of India's (ECI) decision to conduct a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) 2025 of electoral rolls in States such as Bihar sparked public debates and litigation. Critics argue that such an exercise risks mass disenfranchisement, while supporters view it as essential to strengthen electoral integrity. The article by Naira Jejeebhoy explains why an intensive revision is constitutionally valid, administratively necessary, and technologically improved compared to earlier exercises.

A deep cleaning of India's electoral rolls

On April 12, 1950, while introducing the Representation of the People Bill in Parliament, the Minister of Law, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, emphasised that the preparation of an electoral roll is "a condition precedent for election". The statutory framework in India, therefore, provides for periodic and special revisions to ensure accuracy of the electoral roll.

Nevertheless, there have been concerns about the decision of the Election Commission of India (ECI) to revise the electoral rolls in some States by carrying out a Special Intensive Revision (SIR). The question that arises is whether the ECI's endeavour is ultimately directed at reinforcing or undermining public trust in the democratic process.

Restoring the foundation

There are two modes of updating rolls: intensive revisions, which rebuild the list from scratch, and summary revisions, which make incremental corrections. The last major intensive revision took place between 2002 to 2003. In recent decades, the ECI has relied on special summary revisions, under which claims and objections are invited on a draft roll. In the meantime, rapid migration, expanding urban centres, and high residential mobility have left electoral rolls riddled with duplicates, outdated entries and inaccuracies. Therefore, SIR 2025 was the need of the hour.

The implementation of SIR in Bihar in June 2025 resulted in the filing of several petitions before the Supreme Court labelling the revision exercise unconstitutional and illegal. The challenge proceeds on the basis that insistence on fresh enumeration and documents from existing registered electors is contrary to the constitutional right of universal adult franchise and will result in mass deletion of voters from the rolls. Notably, however, the authority to undertake such an exercise flows directly from the



Naira Jejeebhoy

Advocate whose area of practice includes election law and has represented the Election Commission of India in proceedings



Kumar Utsav

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constitutional scheme itself, which vests the superintendence, direction, and control over the preparation of electoral rolls in the ECI. At the heart of this exercise lies the ECI's endeavour to ensure that only eligible citizens vote, as envisaged under Article 326 of the Constitution. The revision and verification of electoral rolls is a routine and necessary process. Such corrections do not, by themselves, imply disenfranchisement or targeting. Countries such as Germany and Canada rely on civil registries or information sharing between different government agencies to update voter rolls; India does not have such a mechanism. The ECI must therefore independently verify eligibility.

The criticism levelled at SIR 2025 ignores the inherent difficulties in screening citizenship, which is the fundamental basis for eligibility to vote. These difficulties in ascertaining eligibility were, however, anticipated by the Indian legislature, which conferred power on the ECI to carry out a special revision in such manner as it may think fit. SIR 2025 is being carried out pursuant to the constitutional mandate and to ensure that no eligible citizen is excluded from the roll, while simultaneously excluding ineligible persons.

The detailed guidelines for SIR 2025 issued by the ECI contain administrative innovations, technological improvements, and efforts at transparency and participation. Under the present framework of SIR, the ECI has undertaken door-to-door physical verification of each elector. The onus of proving citizenship continues to lie on the applicant. However, the list of acceptable documentary proof is expanded to 11 items, from merely four in 2003, resulting in a more liberal and elector-friendly framework. At the suggestion of the Supreme Court, the ECI also agreed to accept Aadhaar cards as proof of identity. Further, booth-level officers

actively assisted electors in tracing their eligibility and obtaining prescribed eligibility documents.

The SIR process marks a notable shift towards technological accessibility. For the first time, all supporting documents are digitised. Further, enumeration forms are being made available through online platforms. After the publication of the draft roll, any person who has any claim or objections has the option to file the same using the online platform.

The ECI did not restrict capacity-building to its own machinery but also trained booth-level agents of recognised political parties. The SIR guidelines also contain provisions for engagement with parties and sharing of electoral rolls.

What the numbers show

Over 7.5 crore entries were subjected to verification during SIR in Bihar. The total number of electors removed from the draft list was 65 lakh. In addition to the 1,60,813 BLAs of political parties, the Supreme Court also deputed volunteers from the State Legal Services Authority to assist in the submission of claims/objections/corrections online. Nevertheless, only 2,53,524 claims and objections were received in total after publication of the draft roll. Of these, only 36,500 were claims for inclusion (0.56% when compared to the total number of deletions during the revision). Not a single appeal was filed against any deletion. These figures indicate that the SIR exercise was, more or less, grounded in careful and accountable scrutiny.

By embracing SIR, the ECI has demonstrated that its constitutional duties will not be subordinated to convenience or political pressures. Instead, they are being pursued with clarity, courage, and accountability. A democracy strengthens itself not by avoiding difficult tasks, but by undertaking them when it matters most. SIR 2025 is one such effort.

Background: Why Electoral Roll Revision Is Critical

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Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, while introducing the Representation of the People Bill (1950), stated that **accurate electoral rolls are a precondition for elections.**

India's statutory framework provides for:

Intensive revisions (complete reconstruction of rolls).

Summary revisions (incremental corrections).

The last major intensive revision occurred in **2002–03**. Since then, rapid urbanisation, migration, and mobility have resulted in **duplicate entries, outdated addresses, and inaccuracies**, necessitating a deeper cleansing process.

SIR 2025: Constitutional and Legal Justification

1. Constitutional Basis

Article 324 vests **superintendence, direction, and control** of electoral roll preparation in the ECI.

The revision is meant to uphold **universal adult franchise (Article 326)** by ensuring:

Eligible voters are included, and

Ineligible voters are removed.

2. Supreme Court Challenges

Petitions in Bihar argued:

Fresh verification burdens existing electors.

Risk of unlawful deletions.

The article counters that:

Revision **does not automatically mean disenfranchisement.**

Countries with strong democracies (Germany, Canada) update rolls using civil registries—India lacks such systems and must rely on ECI-led verification.

Why SIR 2025 Became Necessary

High mobility and **urban migration** make summary revisions insufficient.

Electoral fraud concerns (duplicates, deceased voters, incorrect addresses).

A clean roll strengthens legitimacy and prevents contested elections.

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1. Door-to-Door Verification

Every elector verified physically—significant scale and rigour.

2. Expanded Documentary Proof

From 4 documents (2003) to **11 acceptable documents** today.

Aadhaar accepted as identity proof after Supreme Court recommendations.

3. Technology Integration

Digitisation of all supporting documents.

Online availability of enumeration forms.

Claims and objections can be filed online after draft publication.

4. Political Party Participation

Booth-Level Agents (BLAs) of recognised political parties were trained.

Rolls shared transparently to ensure multi-party scrutiny.

5. Civil Society Involvement

State Legal Services Authority volunteers assisted electors in filing corrections.

Outcomes from Bihar's SIR 2025

1. Large-Scale Clean-Up

7.5 crore entries verified.

65 lakh deletions (only ineligible/duplicate entries).

2. Minimal Dispute or Public Resistance

Only **2.53 lakh claims/objections** submitted.

Only **36,500 claims for new inclusion**

This is **0.56% of total deletions**, suggesting accuracy rather than arbitrary removal.

No appeals filed against deletions.

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The low number of disputes indicates the exercise was largely

accurate, systematic, and transparent.

Larger Implications for Electoral Democracy

Reinforces **voter list integrity**, which is the foundation of free and fair elections.

Demonstrates ECI's willingness to undertake challenging reforms despite political pressures.

Moves India closer to international best practices in electoral roll maintenance.

Shows that democratic credibility requires **proactive, timely corrections**, not administrative inertia.

Conclusion

The article argues that Special Intensive Revision (SIR 2025) reflects the ECI's commitment to constitutional responsibility, accuracy, and transparency in electoral roll management. Far from undermining trust, the initiative seeks to restore confidence in the democratic process by eliminating inaccuracies and ensuring only eligible citizens vote. As democracies strengthen themselves by confronting—not avoiding—complex challenges, SIR 2025 stands as a necessary and bold step in protecting the integrity of India's electoral foundation.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Critically examine whether large-scale electoral roll revisions such as the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) 2025 strengthen or weaken public trust in India's democratic process. **(150 words)**

Page : 08 : Editorial Analysis

Care as disability justice, dignity in mental health

A 60-year-old recalls eating leftovers as a child, in the absence of his birth family, and, even today, is passively engaged with life. A survivor of childhood abuse says that she now views her problems as 'thoosi' (dust), but only after being homeless and battling insurmountable trauma. Then there is a recollection by someone of stark abuse while under psychiatric care, who was chained and forced to drink water from a washroom because they were deemed 'unmanageable'.

These stories embody suffering in ways that numerical data fail to capture. These are stories that spotlight how different people are impacted and respond differently to distress and care, based on their contexts and beliefs. A lack of commitment to unpack these narratives risks shrinking the immersive exploration that is warranted. It may touch the surface of healing and venture a little beyond but will ultimately relegate the discourse that spotlights barriers, attitudes, social distances, and inadequate care systems to the margins.

Yet, dominant approaches to psychosocial disability continue to view these experiences through a deficits lens, as they are focused on 'integration' into communities that hold stereotypical understandings of productive living, a reductionist imagination of 'the normal', and a social order that goes unquestioned. The gaps in mental health-care access continue to range from 70%-90% globally. While third generation medications promise fewer side-effects and evidence-based therapies proliferate, the fundamental questions remain.

The gaps

We argue that mental health care must be radically reimagined as the primary pursuit of dignity and disability justice that centres equity, inclusion, and diversity, highlighting complexities with all their nuances; as the practice of staying with people and persisting alongside them through suffering, whether that suffering is relational, material, or structural in nature. Care in this lens is a process of individual-level meaning-making, responding to adverse life events, relational disruptions and existential queries, while fulfilling needs for safety, relationships, everyday wins, and problem-solving. It is also a tussle between one's context and one's chosen path, complicating the narrative and the care plan.

To untangle the knots between mental health and the social context we must start with asking what kind of world creates such suffering, and how can one standardise essential protocols while achieving personalisation at scale.

Sustained material and relational deprivation,



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Mental health care must be radically reimagined as the primary pursuit of dignity and disability justice that gives importance to equity, inclusion and diversity

both as a cause and an outcome of mental ill health, often go unaddressed, resulting in a range of losses. An example is found in the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data on suicides, which while reducing causes to monotonic categories as reported by police, shows that a third of suicides in India are due to family problems and another tenth due to relational ruptures. Feelings of shame, rejection, alienation and abandonment that underlie distress are rarely spoken about, limiting both the language and expression of psychic pain. Solutions often attempt to fix patterns (labelled 'maladaptive'), placing the onus for broken relationships, social withdrawal and loss of vitality squarely on the person.

Multiple explanations for distress may persist concurrently, ranging from biological (neurotransmitter alterations, inflammatory markers), psychological (learned patterns, cognitive frameworks), social (isolation, economic precarity, discrimination), cultural (loss of traditional meaning systems), political (oppressive structures, dismantled safety nets), and historical (intergenerational trauma, colonial legacies). These explanations do not exist in isolation. They are overlapping and intersect with caste, class, gender and queer identities in ways that shape both the experience of suffering and access to care. Rather than viewing these as competing frameworks, comprehensive care requires attention to diverse explanations and approaches simultaneously.

On care practice

People experiencing emotional and social crises or intense alienation require the space to grapple with these existential uncertainties. In contrast, dominant notions that locate these within biological or social determinants frameworks obscure these meaning-making dimensions of mental well-being. As much as living in extreme housing precarity may limit opportunities to pursue what is personally meaningful, having a stable house or income alone cannot diminish feelings of disconnection from self and the world.

While privileging tangible interventions such as medication, housing or cash transfers and grit and resilience building (which is not exclusively individual dependent) must assume greater importance, equally, care planning must highlight the need for relational work that engages with questions around vulnerabilities and invulnerabilities, purpose and existential incoherence, located in social-ecological contexts. In these ideas lie the foundations of disability justice, that embodies the spirit of liberation and wholeness, and not mere integration into an unequal world.

What if we thought critically, practised with solidarity, and pursued more longitudinal work that is real-world sensitive? Care would then be re-centred as the practice of relational justice and examine concerns that sustain distress and approaches that suffuse hope in complex scenarios. This could range from medications and economic security, to finding hope in spiritual practice, one's goals and community connection. The focus shifts from treatment to 'what does this person need to live the life they want?', recognising that there are variegated and yet valid ways of understanding and responding to distress.

A secondary yet important gain might address the one issue that affects all mental health work – engagement with a service and continuity of care. Many people who access a service are disillusioned and lose faith and trust for innumerable reasons. This disengagement could often result in a downward spiral into states of despair, loneliness and homelessness. Building trust involves honest collaborations, dialogic practice and acceptance of non-linear outcomes.

Justice beyond fair distribution of resources or services, as espoused by Sandel, becomes central; as a process of recognising what we owe to one another and the moral threads holding our relationships and society. In mental health care, this means asking whether our systems centre dignity and account for the injustices that precipitated suffering, and, importantly, whether care can even be conceived without addressing the contexts that created harm in the first place.

Transforming care, education and research

Mental health education may need to prepare people to sit with discomfort and uncertainty, navigate the complexity of a person's social world, celebrate small wins, and remain open to diverse approaches. Research priorities require reorientation toward capturing the granular aspects of care rather than only large-scale, generalisable findings. These actions require examining micro-level processes through implementation science and transdisciplinary methods that link practice and theory, enabling continuous learning about what works, for whom, and how.

Most critically, those currently designated as non-specialists and those who bring lived experience need to be recognised and compensated as practitioners who bring community wisdom and contextual understanding that formal training cannot replicate, and receiving preparation and resources that enable them to engage with the same systemic support afforded to those with professional credentials.

GS - 2 : Social Justice

UPSC Mains Practice Question : Critically examine how social determinants such as poverty, caste, gender, housing precarity and intergenerational trauma shape mental health outcomes. How should India's mental health policy respond? (250 words)

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Context :

The article argues for a fundamental reimagining of mental health care in India by centering dignity, disability justice, and contextualised care rather than biomedical reductionism. Drawing from lived experiences of trauma, homelessness, and systemic neglect, the author highlights how dominant mental-health frameworks fail to address the social, relational and structural roots of suffering. The piece calls for a more equitable, person-centered and socially aware mental-health ecosystem.

Key Issues Highlighted

1. Lived Experiences Reveal Invisible Suffering

The narratives of:

- childhood neglect,
- trauma,
- abuse within psychiatric institutions,
- homelessness,

demonstrate forms of distress that statistics alone cannot capture. These stories show that suffering is shaped by material deprivation, social stigma, and structural exclusion, not merely by clinical symptoms.

2. Dominant Mental Health Approaches Remain Deficit-Oriented

Current psychosocial disability frameworks:

- focus on "integrating" individuals into a narrowly defined normal;
- emphasize productivity and behavioural correction;
- often overlook socio-cultural meanings of distress;
- ignore the structural injustices that shape vulnerabilities.

The treatment gap — 70–90% globally — persists despite advances in medication and therapies.

Why a New Framework is Needed

1. Mental Health as a Question of Dignity and Disability Justice

The article argues for a paradigm where:

- mental health care upholds equity, inclusion, diversity;
- distress is understood through biological, psychological, social, cultural, political, and historical lenses simultaneously;
- the focus is not only on symptom reduction but on living with meaning, relational support, and structural change.

This aligns with the UNCRPD (UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities) rights-based framework.

2. Addressing Social Determinants and Contextual Suffering

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The article highlights:

sustained poverty,
relational deprivation,
shame and alienation,
caste, class, gender and queer identity-based marginalisation,
intergenerational trauma and colonial legacies.

These determinants shape both distress and access to care. Current systems often pathologise individuals without examining the contexts that create harm.

3. Multiple Explanations of Distress Must Coexist

Instead of privileging one model (biological vs. psychosocial), the article emphasises pluralism:

neurotransmitter changes,
learned patterns,
economic precarity,
cultural meaning systems,
political oppression,
historical trauma

All must be considered simultaneously in care planning.

Transforming Care Practices

1. Care as Relational Justice

Reimagining care requires:

— solidarity and long-term engagement with individuals;
making space for existential questions, meaning-making, and personal goals;
shifting focus from “treatment compliance” to “What does this person need to live the life they want?”.

This approach supports continuity of care and reduces disengagement.

2. Beyond Tangible Interventions

While medication, housing, and cash transfers are important, they must be accompanied by:

relational work,
dialogic engagement,
trust-building,
acceptance of non-linear recovery.

This model views mental health crises as human experiences, not merely clinical events.

3. Justice as Repairing Social Relationships

Drawing on Michael Sandel’s conception of justice, the article argues that mental health systems must:

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recognise what society owes to individuals,

address injustices that precipitated distress,
provide care that considers lived realities of oppression.

Transforming Education and Research

1. Training Mental Health Practitioners Differently

Education must prepare professionals to:

sit with ambiguity and discomfort,
understand complex social worlds,
value small wins,
adopt diverse and contextualised approaches.

2. Research Must Capture Micro-Level Care Processes

The article advocates for:

implementation science,
transdisciplinary methods,
real-world sensitivity,
learning "what works, for whom, and how."

3. Recognising Non-Specialist and Lived-Experience Practitioners

People with lived experience and community workers must be:

recognised as legitimate practitioners,
compensated fairly,
provided systemic support and training.

This challenges strict hierarchies of professional expertise.

Conclusion

The article calls for a radical transformation of mental health care: from a system that pathologises individuals to one that recognises distress as rooted in social, relational, cultural and structural contexts. By foregrounding dignity, disability justice, relational care, and contextual understanding, India can move toward mental health systems that are humane, inclusive, and responsive to real-world complexity. Such a shift is essential for bridging the treatment gap and building an ecosystem where people not only survive, but live meaningful, connected lives.