

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

Wednesday, 03 Dec, 2025

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Page 01 : GS 2 : Social Justice / Prelims

The World Health Organization (WHO) has released its first global guidelines on the use of GLP-1 (Glucagon-Like Peptide-1) agonist drugs for long-term obesity management in adults. These guidelines come at a time when obesity has become a global epidemic, with huge health and economic consequences. The WHO's stance marks an important policy shift, acknowledging both the effectiveness of these drugs and the need for equitable access in fighting non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

WHO backs use of GLP-1 drugs for weight loss

Ramya Kannan
CHENNAI

In a much-anticipated development, the World Health Organization (WHO) has finally issued global guidelines on the use of popular weight loss drugs. These glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) therapies are being used for the treatment of obesity in adults.

The WHO guidelines released on December 1 posit equitable access as the key element of using such therapies, and read them as one element of a full complement of actions against obesity.

"While medication alone won't solve this global health crisis, GLP-1 therapies can help millions overcome obesity and reduce its associated harms," WHO director general Tedros Adhonom Ghebreyesus said, while launching these guidelines.

With the guidelines, the WHO recognises that the GLP-1 class of drugs are indeed effective, and that they are likely to have an impact on the global costs of obesity. Beyond its health impacts, the global economic cost of obesity is predicted to reach \$3 trillion annually by 2030.

There are two primary components to the WHO's recommendations: That GLP-1 therapies may be used by adults, excluding pregnant women, conditionally, for the long-term treatment of obesity; and that intensive behavioural interventions in diet and physical activity must be continued alongside the drugs.

The WHO also specified that while the efficacy of these therapies in treating obesity and improving me-



WHO guidelines posit equitable access as the key element of using such therapies.

tabolic and other outcomes was evident, it was making a conditional recommendation partly because of the limited data available on long-term efficacy, safety and probable outcomes when the drugs are discontinued, but also because of their costs which put them out of the reach of many people.

Obesity is a complex chronic disease and a ma-

ajor driver of non-communicable diseases, such as cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, and some types of cancer.

It also contributes to poorer outcomes for patients who have infectious diseases.

It is only in recent years that the treatment for obesity has been revolutionised by the emergence of a class of drugs that not only effect significant weight loss, but also confer a whole range of metabolic benefits to individuals.

Equitable access

A special communication in the recent issue of *JAMA* notes that "medication alone cannot solve the global obesity burden. Countries must ensure equitable access not only to comprehensive disease management, but also to health promotion and pre-

vention policies and interventions targeting the general population and those at high risk."

Anoop Mishra, director of the National Diabetes, Obesity, and Cholesterol Foundation, said: "I believe this statement by the WHO is a progressive step towards obesity management worldwide. For India, the costs of these drugs is a roadblock that needs more efforts, insurance coverage and development of generics."

V. Mohan, chairman of the Madras Diabetes Research Foundation, added: "It is good that the WHO's guidelines specify that the drugs alone will not suffice." "Your diet and exercise are paramount, and only when those fail, and when you really need the help of a drug or if morbidly obese, then you go for these drugs," he said.

Why the Guidelines Matter?

- Obesity is now recognized as a chronic, complex disease, not just a lifestyle issue.
- It is a major driver of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers, and poor outcomes in infectious diseases.
- The global economic burden of obesity is projected to reach \$3 trillion by 2030.
- GLP-1 drugs (like semaglutide) have gained global attention for their dramatic weight-loss and metabolic benefits.

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Key Features of WHO's Guidelines

1. Conditional Recommendation for GLP-1 Use

- GLP-1 drugs may be used in adults (excluding pregnant women) for long-term treatment of obesity.
- It is a conditional recommendation due to:
 - limited long-term safety data
 - uncertainty about outcomes after discontinuation
 - extremely high costs making access inequitable

2. Behavioural Interventions Remain Essential

- WHO emphasizes that medication alone cannot solve obesity.
- Continued focus on:
 - diet modification
 - physical activity
 - behavioural counselling

3. Equity as a Core Principle

- The guidelines highlight equitable access, warning that high prices make these drugs inaccessible to low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).
- Obesity management must be integrated with:
 - health promotion
 - prevention strategies
 - comprehensive NCD policies

Implications for India

1. Access and Affordability Challenges

- Indian experts such as Dr. Anoop Mishra highlight the high cost of GLP-1 drugs as a barrier.

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- Need for:

- insurance coverage
- development of generic alternatives
- inclusion in national obesity and diabetes programs

2. Importance of Lifestyle Interventions

- As Dr. V. Mohan points out, drugs should not replace:
 - healthy diet
 - regular exercise
- GLP-1s are recommended only when lifestyle measures fail or in cases of severe obesity.

3. Burden of Obesity and NCDs

- India is experiencing rapid growth in:
 - obesity
 - type-2 diabetes
 - cardiovascular diseases
- WHO recommendations may push the government to adopt a more structured obesity management policy.

Conclusion

The WHO's endorsement of GLP-1 drugs for obesity management reflects a significant shift in global health policy. While these drugs offer promising results, the WHO warns against viewing them as a standalone solution. The emphasis on equitable access, sustained lifestyle interventions, and comprehensive public health strategies underscores the need for a balanced, holistic approach. For India, the challenge lies in ensuring affordability, strengthening preventive healthcare, and integrating obesity management into broader NCD control programs.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: The term GLP-1, recently in the news, is associated with:

- (a) A gene-editing tool
- (b) A class of weight-loss and anti-diabetic drugs
- (c) A vaccine adjuvant
- (d) A stem-cell therapy

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: High cost and limited availability of GLP-1 therapies risk deepening global health inequities. Discuss how India can ensure affordable and accessible obesity treatment in line with WHO guidelines. **(150 Words)**

Page 07 : GS 3 : Environment / Prelims

As the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) begins work on its **Seventh Assessment Report (AR7)** in Paris, geopolitical tensions surrounding climate science have resurfaced. Despite strong global consensus on anthropogenic climate change, the United States under President Trump has once again questioned the legitimacy of climate science, calling global warming a "hoax". This comes at a crucial time when the world is rapidly approaching the **1.5°C warming threshold**, and international climate cooperation is weakening.

Key Highlights of the News

1. IPCC Begins Work on AR7 (2028–29)

- Around **600 experts from 100+ countries** have convened in France to begin drafting AR7.
- This is the first time all lead authors are meeting in one venue, aimed at strengthening interdisciplinary coordination.
- AR7 is expected to be published in **2028 or 2029**, depending on consensus.

2. U.S. Pushback Against Climate Science

- President Trump continues to call climate change "the greatest con job ever".
- Significant **cuts to U.S. climate research funding** have been ordered.
- U.S. climate scientist **Katherine Calvin**, co-chair of an IPCC working group, was fired from NASA due to these cuts.
- Despite the government's stance, **dozens of American scientists** are still contributing to the IPCC.

3. Weakening Multilateralism

- French Ecological Transition Minister Monique Barbut stressed that climate science is under attack.
- The IPCC operates on **consensus**, meaning even one country can block approval of the report.
- This framework makes the process vulnerable to political interference, especially by countries dependent on fossil fuels.

4. Rising Climate Risks Highlight Urgency



exceed **1.5°C by 2030**.

- The UN now says the safe limit might be breached even earlier.
- The urgency of AR7 is high, but political disagreements are slowing its schedule.

5. Disagreements Over Publication Timeline

Group 1: High Ambition Coalition

(Including EU + climate-vulnerable nations)

- Want AR7 in **2028** to align with the **Global Stocktake** under the Paris Agreement.
- Aim: Push stronger commitments.

Group 2: Emerging Economies + Fossil Fuel Producers

- Want AR7 in **2029**, arguing that more time is needed.
- Their position echoes resistance seen at **COP30 in Brazil**, where countries avoided committing to a fossil fuel phase-out.

Conclusion

The initiation of the IPCC's AR7 process comes at a critical juncture when the world is fast approaching irreversible climate thresholds. Yet the growing politicisation of climate science—in particular the U.S. administration's repeated dismissal—shows how geopolitical tensions threaten global climate action. While disagreements over the report's timeline reflect deeper divides between high ambition countries and fossil fuel-dependent economies, the IPCC remains central to informing climate negotiations. The challenge ahead lies in ensuring that scientific integrity prevails over political obstruction, enabling the world to act swiftly on the mounting climate crisis.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : Consider the following statements:

1. The IPCC is a scientific body under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
2. The IPCC prepares periodic Assessment Reports based on scientific consensus from member countries.
3. All IPCC reports must be approved unanimously by member governments.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 2 only

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : The disagreements over the release timeline of the IPCC's AR7 report reflect deeper divides between climate-vulnerable nations and fossil fuel-dependent economies. Examine. **(150 words)**

The Kosi—often called “Bihar’s River of Sorrow”—is one of the most dynamic and sediment-heavy rivers in the world. Despite decades of embankment construction along the Kosi and other eastern Gangetic rivers, catastrophic floods continue. The debate resurfaces: Do embankments control floods or worsen them?



Some call the Kosi the 'river of sorrow' because of the devastating effects of its floods. (1)

How the river Kosi's shifting course exposes the perils of embankments

Do concrete embankments protect against floods from rivers such as the Kosi, or are their very walls making the plains more vulnerable? Floods without embankments are milder; the alternative may be to learn to live with floods, as the US has done, where embankments have been removed

M. Rupa Rasmata

In August 2008, Bihar experienced one of the worst floods in nearly four decades when the Kosi river breached its embankment at Sasaula in Saran district of Nepal, killing more than 400 people and displacing thousands. A staggering 33 lakh people were affected at the peak of the flood in Bihar.

Indeed, the Kosi river breaches the walls of its embankment every few years, imperilling lives and livelihoods, and earning it the name 'river of sorrow'. In the eastern Gangetic plains and the adjoining floodplains, rivers have overflowed during the monsoons for centuries, causing catastrophic floods. The Kosi originates in Tibet and Nepal and later joins the Ganga in Bihar. Often called 'sugar Kosi' because of its seven tributaries, it is a fragile and dynamic river that naturally carries large quantities of sediment. Over the years, the river has shifted its course by several kilometres, subsequently triggering floods.

Committee report
According to a report of the People's Commission on the Kosi Basin, an independent commission, the river has moved 120 km westwards in the last 250 years due to a heavy natural sedimentation process. Experts suggest the construction of a barrage in Bihar in the 1950s, followed by an embankment in Bihar, has significantly altered the river's natural flow.

Embankments are artificial structures made of earth, stone or concrete, designed to control water flow in flood-prone areas.

These structures are made to endure the effects of gravity, water pressure, and other external forces and are expected to remain stable over time. While they are often promoted as an ideal solution to protect settlements and enhance agriculture, experts have long warned of their limitations.

The report observed that the two main functions of a river—providing land by eroding and depositing and draining its basin—are disrupted by embankments. It further cautioned that these structures are useful only when the river carries less silt; otherwise, they could do more harm than good.

Rather than pay heed to these warnings, however, the Assam government proceeded with building embankments along the Brahmaputra river. While the idea was simple—to prevent floods—in effect were counterproductive. In Assam, particularly, coarse silt and sand were deposited by rivers on the banks, affecting agriculture. Local communities lived in constant fear of a breach. Situation reduced the river's depth and made navigation more difficult.

Flood control
“The northern rivers carry a lot of silt. So if you embank them, the river keeps getting higher because of the accumulation of silt,” said S. Somnath, head of the Centre for Research on the Economics of Climate Change, Food, Energy and Environment. “And because every monsoon the silt adds up, an embanked river after a few years turns dangerous, even though initially it provided some protection.”

This is why such incidents related to the Kosi aren't isolated; the river breached its embankment in 1963, 1968, 1971, 1980, 1984, 1987, and in 1991, before it breached again in 2008 and 2014. Almost exactly a year ago, when the Mahuli tributary of the Kosi river entered India and hit the Kosi barrage, the quantity of the silt in the river increased, causing devastating floods.

Every year, the amount of silt threatens local and submerges vast tracts of agricultural land.

The reported breaches raise an important question: should embankments be considered flood-control structures at all?

Influent and affluent rivers
“Whether embankments are necessary depends on the site,” Talal Yabika, a postdoctoral scholar working on the WATCON Project at The School of Oriental and African Studies, London, said.

If development is the aim, then embankments will serve the purpose, because you tame the river, but people have always been living with floods for centuries. When the British noticed that the Kosi river was shifting its course, they found it difficult to control it, and decided to build an embankment to control the flow. But the result of this exercise was water logging outside the embankment, causing floods for those who live between the embankment,” Dr. Yabika added.

On the other hand, Binod W. Pandey, director of the Centre for Himalayan Studies at the University of Delhi, argued that embankments can play an important role in rivers in the western Himalayan region as they are less flood-prone and geologically more stable. He, however, cautioned against constructing embankments on the rivers in the eastern Himalayan region as they were vulnerable to breaches, geologically unstable and prone to landslides.

“Rivers draining in the west are influent, meaning that as the river flows through different States, the precipitation contains the water well within their basins, preventing floods.

Tall promises
About of the Bihar election this year, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) promised “food to fortune” in their election manifestos for the people of Bihar. The coalition assured residents that if elected in power, the newly formed government will initiate the river linking project—embankments and canals under the “food to fortune” model—to promote agriculture and fisheries, according to the Samajwadi Party released jointly by the BJP and NDA.

Though this promise carries with it a tone of political optimism, the State's geography is complex and requires a deeper understanding of the long-standing ecological realities, including sedimentation and siltation.

The river linking project in question is the Kosi-Mechi project, which aims to extend the Kosi's Eastern Kosi Main Canal up to the river Mechi, a tributary of the river Mahananda, mainly to provide irrigation in the water-scarce region along the Mahananda basin during the kharif season. However, in reality, if it rains near the Kosi catchment area, the monsoon reaches Mahananda in a day or two and there is hardly any need for water during the monsoon.

“But if the issue [flooding] was to be solved by an embankment, then there should have been no floods at all, but that is not the case. If the river linking project is completed, 5,247 acres of extra water will be diverted towards the Mechi river, but in the floods last year, Kosi river carried nearly 6 lakh tonnes of water. So, we are not reducing the flood water by building embankments or by linking the rivers,” Mr. Yadav explained.

Every year, more money has to be spent on raising the embankment, but that is not a sustainable solution, he added. “In fact, it is a luxurious choice. Even though money is spent, does it actually assist? And more importantly, who is benefiting from it? The locals struck (with) the embankment face the wrath without any rehabilitation facilities.”

“With the embankment, the flood has increased nearly four times,” Mr. Yadav said. He added that dealing should be done according to scientific methods. Dr. Somnath concluded that embankments don't work because of its inactivity, groundwater, and biodiversity, and expressed the need for a holistic discourse would change from flood control to flood resistance.

For the families that lose their homes every year when a river overflows, the embankment is both a threat and a promise, a line drawn against nature that never seems to hold for long. But as the Kosi's story illustrates, every time an embankment is raised, the river is quick to reclaim its domain.

Not a viable option
“The US has dismantled embankments and allowed the flood to happen. When we build more infrastructure that alters the river's course, the river bed keeps increasing silt, but floods without embankments are much milder. If an embankment is built, then we need to keep raising its height, but that requires finances,” Dr. Somnath said.

The alternative that he proposed is to learn to live with floods. “When we do that, we are allowing the river to act as a natural drainage system,” Dr. Somnath said.

Mohendra Yadav, member of the Kosi Nav Nirman Manch Movement, also stands by the concept of ‘living with floods’ but believes this can happen only if people between the Kosi embankment are trained with early warning systems and provided rehabilitation outside.

“The situation that can be offered to people is to rehabilitate them outside the embankment because if the embankment is blocking them, they cannot get out, even with early warning systems.”

“For India, an embankment is not a viable option because we don't have the infrastructure to maintain it,” he said. But as the embankment are a reality for many rivers in northern India, Dr. Yabika suggested that one has to “identify ways to make them better and stable. Along with that, pakochandi (abandoned ancient river or stream channels) should be revived so that water is distributed.”

Mr. Yadav also suggests the improvement of natural channels, which

Why the Kosi is so dangerous? (Geographical & Hydrological Reasons)

(a) High Sedimentation

- Kosi originates in Tibet + Nepal's young, fragile Himalayas → massive sediment load.
- Known as Sapta Kosi (7 tributaries).
- This high silt load raises the riverbed each year.

(b) Shifting Nature

- According to People's Commission on the Kosi Basin:
Kosi shifted 120 km westward in 250 years, one of the world's highest migration rates.

(c) Affluent vs. Influent Rivers

- Eastern Himalayan rivers are affluent → water increases downstream (more rainfall in plains).
- Western Himalayan rivers are influent → water decreases downstream.

This makes embankments more vulnerable in the east.

Embankments: Intended to protect, but they increase risk

What embankments were supposed to do

- Prevent monsoon flooding.
- Promote agriculture, settlements, infrastructure.

But reality is opposite.

How embankments make floods worse (Scientific Mechanisms)

(1) Silt deposition raises river level inside the embankment

"An embanked river keeps getting higher because of silt accumulation."

— E. Somanathan

- Riverbed rises each year.
- After some years the river flows higher than the surrounding land → catastrophic risk.

(2) Breach becomes inevitable

Kosi's breach years: 1963, 1968, 1971, 1980, 1984, 1987, 1991, 2008, 2024

→ Frequency shows structural failure.

(3) Water-logging outside the embankment

- People and farmland between embankments are trapped.
- No drainage, leading to permanent water-logging.

(4) Flood intensity becomes 4x higher

(As per Kosi activists)

(5) Embankment height must be constantly raised

- Huge financial cost
- Yet never enough.

(6) Ecological disruption

- Blocks natural drainage

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Daily News Analysis

- Alters groundwater recharge
- Destroys flood plains

- Damages biodiversity

Historical Warnings Ignored

G.R. Garg Committee (1951)

Warned that:

- Rivers need freedom to erode + deposit.
- Embankments disturb both functions.
- Safe only with low silt-carrying rivers.

Despite this, ASSAM and BIHAR expanded embankments massively, especially along:

- Brahmaputra
- Kosi

How floods become mild without embankments

U.S. example:

- Many embankments have been dismantled.
- Floodplains restored.
- Floods are mild, predictable, and spread-out, causing less damage.

Floods become dangerous only when rivers are unnaturally confined.

Why Kosi embankments fail specifically

- (a) Geologically weak eastern Himalayas → landslides → massive sediment
- (b) Tributaries like Mahuli increase silt at Kosi barrage → sudden flooding
- (c) Political pressure to "control" floods rather than manage them
- (d) Poor maintenance, corruption, lack of desilting
- (e) People trapped between embankments → highest casualties every year

Politics & River-Linking (Kosi-Mechi Project)

Government's "Flood to Fortune" Promise

- Link Kosi with Mechi to boost irrigation.
- Claim: divert extra water to prevent floods.

Criticism:

- Kosi flood last year = 6 lakh cusecs
- Canal can divert only 5247 cusecs → negligible impact
- If embankments were a solution, floods wouldn't happen every year.

Key flaw:

- Floods in Kosi-Mahananda belt depend on rainfall in Nepal foothills → water reaches Mechi within 1-2 days anyway.

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Alternatives Suggested by Experts

1. "Learn to Live with Floods" (Dr. Somanathan)
 - Let the river remain free.
 - Floods stay mild.
 - Use floodplains for seasonal agriculture.
2. Rehabilitation of people inside embankments
 - Early warning + relocation to safer areas
 - Provide alternative land, livelihood
3. Restore Paleochannels
 - Ancient abandoned channels can absorb high flows.
 - Reduce pressure on main river.
4. Scientific desilting
5. Flood-resilience over flood-control

Shift discourse:

- From controlling rivers →
- To adapting to natural flood cycles.

Conclusion

The Kosi's story is a lesson in misplaced hydrological engineering.

Embankments were built to "tame" the river, but they have instead:

- increased siltation
- raised flood intensity
- trapped communities
- caused repeated breaches
- deepened vulnerability

The article ultimately shows:

Rivers cannot be confined.

Floods in the Ganga plains are not a problem to be "controlled,"
but a natural reality to be adapted to.

Kosi repeatedly reclaims its floodplains, reminding us that embankments are not protection but a dangerous illusion.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Which of the following statements is/are correct?

1. The Kosi River has shifted its course westwards by nearly 120 km over the last 250 years.
2. Kosi is known as “Sapta Kosi” because it has seven tributaries.
3. The 2008 flood occurred due to a breach of the embankment in Nepal.

Options:

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

Ans: D)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Discuss how the shifting course of the Kosi River illustrates the geomorphological challenges of rivers in the Eastern Gangetic plains.(250 words)

Page 10 : GS 2 & 3 : Governance and Internal security / Prelims

In response to rising cybercrimes—ranging from “digital arrests” to large-scale cross-border scams—the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) has issued two directives. One mandates SIM binding for messaging apps, and the other requires all smartphone manufacturers to pre-install the **Sanchar Saathi** app by March 2026. While intended to curb fraud involving spoofed IMEI numbers and counterfeit devices, the move has sparked concerns about intrusive surveillance, privacy violations, and proportionality of state action.

Background: Rising Cybercrime Risks

India has witnessed:

- Increasing **government impersonation fraud** through messaging apps.
- Misuse of **spoofed/tampered IMEI numbers**, hampering law enforcement.
- “Digital arrest” scams and cross-border criminal networks.

The government argues that stronger tools are necessary to address these weaknesses in hardware and software ecosystems.

Key Elements of the DoT Directives

1. SIM Binding

- Messaging accounts will be disabled when the SIM card is physically removed.
- This addresses anonymity loopholes exploited in cyber fraud.
- However, it may disrupt legitimate use of apps like WhatsApp across devices.

2. Mandatory Pre-Installation of Sanchar Saathi

- All new smartphones must ship with the app.
- It must be **visible, accessible at first use**, and **cannot be disabled**.
- The app will have high-level system permissions for device authentication.

Why This Is Being Criticised

1. Intrusive System-Level Access

Zero stars

Mandating the Sanchar Saathi app to tackle cybercrime is an overkill

The growing sophistication of cybercrimes, from “digital arrests” to anonymous, large-scale cross-border scams, has made tackling them both urgent and difficult. Cybercriminals have exploited a security gap wherein user accounts on instant messaging apps remain functional even after the associated SIM card has been removed, using this anonymity to conduct government impersonation fraud. The rampant use of spoofed or tampered IMEI numbers has also made tracking perpetrators nearly impossible for law enforcement. It is perhaps inevitable that the government seeks sharper tools to address these software and hardware vulnerabilities, which explains the Department of Telecommunications’ directives on November 28 and December 1. The first mandates “SIM binding” — ensuring that a user’s account is disabled if the physical SIM is removed. In the second, smartphone manufacturers must pre-install the Sanchar Saathi app to verify device authenticity in all new devices by March 2026. While the first directive is a security patch which could inconvenience WhatsApp/Internet messaging users, the second is reminiscent of the saying, the road to hell is often paved with good intentions. The solution to the problem of counterfeit handsets and spoofed IMEI numbers is a cure that could potentially be more damaging than the disease.

The explicit instruction in the directive that the app is “readily visible and accessible to the end users at the time of first use or device setup and that its functionalities are not disabled or restricted” would mean that this app will be given a higher security clearance within the phone’s operating system, allowing it more intrusive access to features such as camera, phone or SMS access. The potential for misuse of this app for state surveillance and being utilised by a malicious entity after compromise to target millions of users is very present and clear. This is no empty fear considering what the Union government has done with the use of Pegasus software to target the political opposition, journalists and activists. Notwithstanding Union Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia’s clarification that users could delete the app, the directive’s text mandating that it cannot be disabled suggests that it will function more as a Panopticon and less as a simple verification tool. As the Supreme Court’s K.S. Puttaswamy (2017) judgment established, any state intrusion into privacy must satisfy the tests of legality, necessity, and proportionality. The government already possesses less intrusive means to verify device genuineness. The Sanchar Saathi web portals, SMS-based checks, and USSD codes should suffice. By ignoring these less invasive alternatives, the directive on Sanchar Saathi fails the proportionality standard. It is little wonder that privacy-conscious manufacturers such as Apple have reportedly refused to comply with this order.

Daily News Analysis

The mandatory app could gain elevated permissions to:

- access camera
- access phone/SMS functions
- run persistently in the background

This expands the risk of:

- **state surveillance**, or
- **malicious exploitation** if the app is compromised.

2. Past Precedents Increase Distrust

Concerns stem from:

- documented misuse of Pegasus spyware
- instances of surveillance of journalists, activists, and opposition members

This historical context amplifies fears of privacy intrusion.

3. Violates the Supreme Court's Privacy Doctrine

The 2017 **K.S. Puttaswamy judgment** requires:

1. **Legality**
2. **Necessity**
3. **Proportionality**

The mandatory Sanchar Saathi directive fails the proportionality test because:

- **Less intrusive alternatives already exist** (SMS checks, USSD codes, the existing Sanchar Saathi website).
- Pre-installation with non-removable status is excessive and unnecessary.

4. Impact on User Rights and Digital Ecosystem

- Undermines user autonomy.
- Creates systemic vulnerabilities—one compromised app could expose millions.
- Global manufacturers like **Apple reportedly refusing compliance** highlight international privacy expectations.

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5. Risk of Over-Regulation

While cybercrime is a genuine threat, mandating security apps at OS level can:

- set a precedent for future forced software installations,
- shrink digital rights,
- undermine trust in the government's technology governance.

Conclusion

While cybercrime has become complex and demands robust state intervention, mandating a pre-installed, non-removable Sanchar Saathi app represents an **over-broad solution to a narrow problem**. The directive risks creating a surveillance infrastructure incompatible with the constitutional right to privacy and fails the proportionality benchmark laid down by the Supreme Court. India requires smart, minimally intrusive cybersecurity measures—not blanket controls that compromise digital freedoms and user trust.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : With reference to the Right to Privacy in India, consider the following statements:

The Supreme Court recognised privacy as a Fundamental Right under Article 21 in the Puttaswamy judgment (2017).

The Right to Privacy is absolute and cannot be restricted under any circumstances.

Any restriction on privacy must meet the tests of legality, necessity and proportionality.

How many of the above statements are correct?

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All three
- D. None

Ans : b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Mandating the pre-installation of the Sanchar Saathi app on all smartphones may undermine the principles of proportionality and the right to privacy.” Discuss in the light of the Supreme Court’s Puttaswamy (2017) judgment.

Nearly four years into the Russia–Ukraine war, the prospects of peace remain distant despite multiple diplomatic attempts. Initial negotiations in 2022 had indicated the possibility of a ceasefire, but geopolitical interests, shifting battlefield dynamics, and external interventions prevented any breakthrough. Today, Ukraine faces military setbacks, domestic pressure, and strategic dilemmas, especially after the emergence of a controversial **28-point peace plan** pushed by the **Trump administration**. This plan, perceived as heavily tilted towards Russian interests, adds to the complexity of achieving a stable settlement.

Why is there no peace in Ukraine?

While Ukraine faces the possibility of a prolonged war with Russia, a controversial 28-point peace plan from the Trump administration proposes recognition of Russian control over key territories. With pressure mounting on President Zelenskyy, the prospect of a ceasefire grows increasingly complicated amid military setbacks

WORLD INSIGHT

Stanley Johny

A prolonged invasion

Russia's Defence Ministry has claimed that its troops have captured Pokrovsk, a strategically important city in Donetsk, which had been under sustained Russian attack for over a year. The capture of Pokrovsk could clear the way for further Russian battlefield gains.

Russian control before February 24, 2022. Front line on June 1, 2025. Russian control and advances to December 1, 2025.

Nov 30, Pokrovsk Russian command reports claim on operations against Ukrainian forces around the city.

Myrmehad Russia claims up to 2,000 Ukrainian troops are trapped.

Trumps plan Almost four years later, another peace plan, this time pushed by the Donald Trump administration, is being circulated among all parties. The 28-point plan appears even less favourable to Ukraine than the Istanbul framework. Kyiv now faces pressure on the frontline where Russian troops are making slow but steady gains; from the U.S., which wants Ukraine to make concessions; and at home where a corruption scandal has rocked the Zelenskyy regime.

According to Mr. Trump's draft plan, Crimea, Luhansk and Donetsk will be recognised "as de facto Russian". Russia controls the whole of Crimea and the whole of Luhansk, but only about 60% of Donetsk. As per the plan, Ukraine will have to withdraw troops from Donetsk. The line of contact in Kherson and

THE GIST

The talks that began in Belarus continued under Turkey's mediation, culminating in a meeting in Istanbul on March 29, 2022. It later emerged that Russian and Ukrainian officials had tentatively agreed on the outlines of an interim settlement.

However, the Istanbul process collapsed. Western governments were hesitant to provide the security guarantees Ukraine demanded. According to Mr. Lavrov, then British Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited Kyiv in early April and "told them to continue to fight".

The Trump plan offers an initial outline to restart talks. While the proposal addresses both Ukraine's future security and Russia's stated concerns — including NATO's eastward expansion — it is widely seen as favouring Moscow.

Some in the U.S. strategic community also argue that Washington could attempt a "Reverse Kissinger" — drawing Russia away from its deepening strategic partnership with China, the U.S.'s principal global rival.

Zelenskyy's dilemma

The Trump plan leaves Mr. Zelenskyy in a difficult position. The Ukrainian leader, whose term expired last year, continues to cling to a power under martial law. Last week, Mr. Zelenskyy's Chief of Staff Andriy Bohdan resigned after a corruption scandal shook the regime. The economy is being propped up by aid from the West, and parts of the country are grappling with power outages as repeated Russian strikes target Ukraine's electricity grid. On the battlefield, the loss of Pokrovsk has marked a major setback.

Mr. Zelenskyy once insisted that peace would be possible only if Russia withdrew from all seized territories, including Crimea. Today, he is prepared to accept a ceasefire along the current frontline, which would leave more than 20% of pre-2014 Ukraine in Russian hands. In Istanbul, there was at least an outline for a possible agreement. That moment has passed.

Now, with the Trump plan, Ukraine finds itself in a much weaker position. It doesn't have a clear path towards military victory. Worse, it risks losing the support of Washington.

European countries, chiefly Germany, the U.K. and France, have pledged continued support. But those assurances carry limited weight if the U.S. exits the support architecture.

If Mr. Zelenskyy accepts the deal Mr. Trump is offering, it would amount to conceding victory to Russia. He could also face serious political consequences at home. If he rejects it, Ukraine risks losing more territory in a prolonged war.

Facts on the ground

The Trump plan offers an initial outline to restart talks. While the proposal addresses both Ukraine's future security and Russia's stated concerns — including NATO's eastward expansion — it is widely seen as favouring Moscow. If implemented, Ukraine would have to cede territory, recognise Russian control of its regions and abandon NATO aspirations, while Russia would be reintegrated into the global political and economic mainstream. Mr. Zelenskyy's initial response was that Ukraine was being forced to choose between its dignity and a close partner (the U.S.). Nevertheless, Ukrainian officials held talks with European and U.S. officials to add their inputs to the Trump proposal.

While efforts to find a political solution continue, the facts on the ground have shifted significantly since the March 2022 Istanbul talks. At that time, Russia, whose initial attack had not gone according to plan, was on the back foot, and appeared willing to make concessions. But after suffering tactical setbacks in Kharkiv and

Source: Institute for the Study of War, Reuters

Daily News Analysis

Why Did Earlier Peace Talks Fail?

1. The Collapse of the Istanbul Process (March 2022)

- Soon after the war began, Russia and Ukraine held talks in **Belarus and Istanbul**.
- A tentative agreement emerged:
 - Russia would withdraw to **pre-war positions** (retain Crimea and Donbas rebel areas).
 - Ukraine would **renounce NATO membership** in exchange for security guarantees.

Why it collapsed?

- Western countries were unwilling to give Ukraine security guarantees.
- Reports suggest that Boris Johnson urged Zelenskyy to **keep fighting instead of compromising**.
- Ukrainian leadership misread Russia's pullback from Kyiv as a sign of weakness.
- As a result, Ukraine chose to continue military resistance, forcing Russia to retreat from Kharkiv and Kherson.

Outcome:

The chance of an early settlement was lost, transforming the conflict into a prolonged war.

The Trump Administration's New Peace Plan

Key Elements of the Controversial 28-Point Plan

1. **Recognition of Russian control** over:
 - Crimea
 - Luhansk
 - Donetsk (full control, including areas not yet held by Russia)
2. **Freezing of conflict lines** in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, allowing Russia to retain captured territory.
3. **Ukraine must withdraw troops** from Donetsk.
4. **Ukrainian military capped** at 6,00,000 personnel.
5. **NATO membership ruled out permanently**:
 - Ukraine must constitutionally commit to not joining NATO.

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- NATO must officially pledge not to admit Ukraine.

6. Russia reintegrated into global economy:

- Sanctions lifted.
- Return to G8.
- Economic cooperation with US.

7. A separate **security guarantee plan** provides NATO-style assurances to Ukraine for up to 10 years.

How is this viewed?

- Seen as **highly favourable to Russia**.
- Would require Ukraine to:
 - Cede large territories,
 - Abandon NATO forever,
 - Accept long-term military limitations.

Shifting Battlefield Realities

Since 2022, the war picture has changed:

Ukraine's Declining Position

- Ukraine's 2023 counteroffensive failed.
- Russia captured **Pokrovsk**, a strategic city in Donetsk, and is advancing in Kupiansk (Kharkiv).
- Western military aid has slowed.
- Electricity grid under constant Russian attack.
- Economic survival tied to Western funds.

Russia's Strengthening Position

- After early setbacks, Moscow:
 - Mobilised fresh troops,
 - Strengthened defensive lines,

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- Shifted to a sustainable long-war strategy.

- Russia continues to make **slow but steady gains**.

Why Is Peace Still Elusive? — Structural Factors

1. Conflicting End Goals

- **Ukraine:** Initially demanded **complete Russian withdrawal**, including Crimea. Now willing to accept a ceasefire on current lines — a major climbdown.
- **Russia:** Wants Ukrainian neutrality, territorial concessions, and NATO rollback.

2. Role of External Powers

- US under Biden: supported Ukraine “as long as it takes”.
- Under Trump: sees the war as **unwinnable** and wants a negotiated deal quickly.
- Europe supports Ukraine but lacks strategic capacity without US backing.
- Some in US strategic circles want a “**Reverse Kissinger**”: pull Russia away from China.

3. Domestic Pressures

- Zelenskyy’s leadership is under strain:
 - His term has expired; he governs under martial law.

- A corruption scandal led to resignation of his Chief of Staff.
- Public fatigue and economic stress rising.

4. Frozen Diplomacy

- Unlike 2022, neither side currently sees a negotiated settlement as beneficial:
 - Russia believes time favours its military.
 - Ukraine fears losing more without Western backing.

Mr. Zelenskyy’s Strategic Dilemma

Ukraine now stands at a difficult crossroads:

If he accepts Trump’s deal:

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- It effectively **concedes victory to Russia**.

- He risks political backlash at home.
- Ukraine loses more than 20% of its territory permanently.

If he rejects the deal:

- Risk of losing US support.
- Prolonged war may lead to more territorial losses.
- Western (especially European) support alone may not be enough.

Conclusion

Peace remains elusive in Ukraine because the **military, political, and diplomatic incentives of the key actors are misaligned**. Early chances of compromise were lost, and the evolving battlefield reality now favours Russia. The new Trump-backed peace plan further complicates matters, offering Ukraine an unpalatable choice between territorial loss and continued conflict. With weakening Western unity and growing internal challenges, Ukraine faces one of its most difficult strategic moments since the war began. Unless a mutually acceptable framework emerges — one that addresses both Russia's security concerns and Ukraine's sovereignty — the conflict is likely to continue as a prolonged, grinding war.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : Why is a durable peace settlement in the Russia–Ukraine conflict still elusive? Discuss. **(150 Words)**

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A template for security cooperation in the Indian Ocean

On November 20, 2025, India hosted the 7th National Security Adviser-level summit of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC). India's National Security Adviser, Ajit Doval, hosted his counterparts from other member-countries, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Mauritius and Bangladesh, while counterparts from Seychelles and Malaysia were observer state and guest, respectively. The CSC has sought to position itself as a critical forum to promote and foster cooperation in the domain of security in the Indian Ocean region.

Initiated as a trilateral grouping between India, Sri Lanka and Maldives in 2011, the group lost steam in light of the political transition in the Maldives and Sri Lanka, and lack of convergence among the member-states to identify priorities in security cooperation in the Indian Ocean. The group reconvened its engagement under the aegis of the CSC in 2020, a proposed framework to further cooperation in maritime security, counter-terrorism, trafficking and organised crime and cybersecurity. Since then, the group has remained steady in not just maintaining momentum among its member-states but also inducting countries. In 2022, Mauritius joined as a full member, while in 2024, the group saw the admission of Bangladesh.

A region witnessing shifts

For India, the summit, in 2025, comes at a pivotal moment. Frameworks of cooperation in the maritime domain, in the broader Indo-Pacific, and indeed in the Indian Ocean appear to be undergoing a crucial shift. Given the focus of the CSC on non-traditional issues of maritime security, it is vital to bolster cooperation in mitigating the looming challenges. While the



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There are encouraging signs that member-country engagement is deepening in the Colombo Security Conclave, but challenges remain

Indian Ocean maritime security architecture remains fragmented due to the lack of any singular institutional framework, groups such as the CSC must remain committed to enhancing cooperation in this regard.

The issue of development

Importantly, for the wider Indian Ocean littoral world, and especially the members of the CSC, maritime security challenges are often coupled with their developmental priorities.

Given the extent of dependency these countries have on the oceans for their economic progress, securing challenges emanating from the maritime domain is crucial. In many ways, maritime security challenges are deeply intertwined with the lives and livelihoods of not just the littoral communities in these countries but also appear to unlock new opportunities for their national economies in today's era of sea-borne globalisation.

This year's summit has been crucial in many ways. First, the group saw further expansion by way of accession of Seychelles as a full-member into the forum. This signals a deep commitment among countries in the region to harness cooperation within the mandate of the CSC. Second, for India, the CSC also marks a new step in further deepening engagement with its maritime neighbours, amidst an increasingly volatile geopolitical and security shift that appears to be underway in the region in lieu of China's growing presence and influence.

Third, the summit further underscores the growing vitality of the security dimension in enhancing cooperation to boost regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean.

Fourth, the inclusion of Malaysia in this year's

summit as a guest participant may pave the way for further expansion of the group.

Viewing the China factor

However, as the CSC envisages its expansion and broadening the contours of its agenda, some key challenges appear to be looming. First, for India, a key maritime security priority is anchored in the nature and extent of the Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, the other member countries of the CSC appear to not view the Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean as a major security challenge given their dependence on Beijing as a key developmental partner. Therefore, a careful balance needs to be achieved by India to address the question of growing Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean.

Second, the CSC must direct efforts to strengthen an institutional framework. At present, the group operates at a National Security Adviser-level structure. With growing synergies among its member-countries, the group must seek to institutionalise cooperation such that it remains consistent in aligning policies with actionable pathways of cooperation.

Third, domestic uncertainties in countries such as Bangladesh, and the ensuing impact on how Dhaka continues to engage with India and the other member-countries may run the risk of uncertainty over the group's resilience.

Given this context, the CSC has made significant advances in heralding a new framework of cooperation in a region that suffers from a deep lack of cohesion and convergence among countries on issues of security. Efforts to imagine the way ahead must remain anchored in the need to foster institutional resilience and cohesion among its member-countries.

GS-2: IR

UPSC Mains Practice Question : The Colombo Security Conclave (CSC) is emerging as a crucial framework for cooperative security in the Indian Ocean, but its effectiveness is constrained by divergent strategic priorities among member states. Discuss. (250 words)

Context :

The 7th National Security Adviser-level meeting of the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC), hosted by India in November 2025, marks a significant moment in India's maritime diplomacy. As geopolitical competition intensifies in the Indian Ocean—especially with China's expanding footprint—the CSC is emerging as a key minilateral platform for regional security cooperation focused on non-traditional threats.

Background

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- Originally formed in 2011 as a trilateral (India–Sri Lanka–Maldives).
- Revived in 2020 as the CSC, expanding its scope to:
 - Maritime security
 - Counter-terrorism
 - Trafficking & organised crime
 - Cybersecurity
- Mauritius (2022) and Bangladesh (2024) joined as full members.
- Seychelles (2025) gained full membership recently.
- Malaysia participated this year as guest-country, indicating future expansion.

Key highlights of the 2025 Summit

1. Expansion of membership – Seychelles joins as a full member, signalling regional trust.
2. India deepens maritime engagement – aligns with India's SAGAR vision and Indo-Pacific strategy.
3. Growing importance of security cooperation due to regional volatility and China's rising presence.
4. Potential for further expansion with Malaysia's participation.

Why CSC matters for the Indian Ocean Region

1. Fragmented maritime security architecture

The Indian Ocean lacks a single unified framework. CSC fills this gap by fostering:

- Information sharing
- Capacity building
- Maritime domain awareness
- Anti-piracy, anti-trafficking operations

2. Interlink between security and development

For small littoral states:

- Marine resources drive their economies.
- Blue economy, fisheries, tourism, and trade depend on secure seas. Thus, CSC supports both security and developmental priorities.

3. A platform for India's neighbourhood-first policy

The CSC strengthens:

- Regional trust
- Policy alignment on maritime issues
- India's leadership role in the Indian Ocean

Major Challenges

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1. Divergence on China's role

- India views China's military and strategic footprint as a major security threat.
 - Other CSC members rely heavily on China for:
 - Infrastructure
 - Investments
 - Trade
- Thus, they are hesitant to label China as a security challenge. Balancing development needs and security concerns is a critical challenge.

2. Lack of strong institutionalisation

- CSC currently functions mainly at NSA-level
- Absence of:
 - Secretariat
 - Legal framework
 - Permanent coordination mechanisms This limits long-term policy continuity.

3. Domestic political uncertainties

- Political shifts, especially in Bangladesh, may affect commitment to CSC goals.
- Small island states face frequent leadership changes which can disrupt consensus.

Way Forward

1. Strengthen institutional mechanisms
 - Permanent secretariat
 - Regular working-level meetings
 - Joint task forces for cyber, maritime, and counter-terror domains
2. Balance China-related sensitivities
 - Focus on non-traditional challenges (piracy, illegal fishing, trafficking)
 - Promote development-oriented maritime cooperation
3. **Boost capacity building**
 - Training, patrol vessels, radar stations, maritime domain awareness
 - Joint exercises and technology sharing
4. **Expand partnerships cautiously**
 - Engage observer and guest states without diluting the core agenda

Conclusion

The CSC represents a promising regional model for minilateral security cooperation in a complex and strategically vital Indian Ocean. While geopolitical competition, especially China's growing influence, presents significant challenges, institutional strengthening and sustained political commitment can transform the CSC into a resilient mechanism supporting both regional

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security and economic development. For India, the CSC is a vital pillar of its ambition to ensure a secure, stable, and cooperative Indian Ocean region.



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