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Daily News Analysis

# The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

## Thursday, 04 Dec, 2025

## Edition : International Table of Contents



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## Page 01 : GS 3 : Environment / Prelims

The proposal to divert Ganga water into the Delhi stretch of the Yamuna was conceived as a short-term measure to augment flow and reduce pollution in one of India's most critically polluted rivers. However, the plan has encountered significant administrative and socio-political hurdles, particularly from the Uttar Pradesh (U.P.) government. The issue highlights the challenges of inter-State water cooperation, environmental governance, and infrastructural constraints.

# Proposal to divert Ganga water to Yamuna hits roadblock

**Nikhil M Babu**
NEW DELHI

An ambitious plan to release water from the Ganga into the Delhi stretch of the Yamuna to increase flow and dilute pollution has hit a roadblock with the Uttar Pradesh government raising concerns, an official source told *The Hindu*.

The plan was to release about 500 cusecs of Ganga water from the Upper Ganga Canal (UGC) in western U.P. to the Yamuna.

As the UGC is not directly connected to the Yamuna, the plan was to first divert water from the UGC to the Eastern Yamuna Canal (EYC) via an existing channel, and then divert it from the EYC to the Yamuna.

"The water diverted from the UGC to the EYC has to pass through three districts of U.P. The U.P. government raised concerns that farmers would protest if the water is diverted and transported through a channel to Delhi and they are not allowed to use it for agriculture, despite it passing through their area," the source said.

**Murky river:** A sample of water from the Yamuna at ITO ghat in New Delhi. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

The U.P. government also flagged that significant re-engineering will be needed for the diversion, the source said.

"A committee is examining the engineering concerns raised by U.P. However, the farmers' issue, first raised in July, remains unresolved," the source said.

As per the plan, the extra water is supposed to pass through the Delhi stretch of the Yamuna and be recovered downstream via the Agra canal by the U.P. government. The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) is not supposed to collect this extra water for drinking water purposes.

**The U.P. government raised concerns that farmers would protest if the Ganga water is diverted**

IIT Roorkee has been tasked with conducting a study to increase the capacity of the Deoband channel in U.P., which is proposed to connect the UGC and EYC to divert water.

Cleaning the Yamuna was one of the key promises made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of the Delhi Assembly election.

**Several delays**

In 2015, the National Green Tribunal (NGT), while hearing a case filed by Manoj Mishra, an ex-IFS officer, devised the 'Maily Se Nirmal Yamuna' (dirty to clean Yamuna) Revitalization Plan, 2017, to clean the Yamuna and restore the floodplains by March 31, 2017.

"We direct the Chief Secretaries to prepare an immediate action plan required to ensure proper environmental flows throughout the year, in the entire river and particularly the stretch flowing through Delhi," the NGT judgment dated January 13, 2015, read. But the deadline was not met.

A National Institute of Hydrology, Roorkee, study recommended maintaining 23 cumecs (cubic metres per second) of river flow after the Hathnikund Barrage, upstream of Delhi. However, the current flow stands at only 10 cumecs.

**New dams**

Diverting the Ganga water was seen as an interim solution. However, the long-term solution is to construct three dams in the upper reaches of the Yamuna.

"Once these dams are completed, excess water during the monsoon can be stored and released during the lean season to maintain the required flow in the river. But the construction of only one of them has started, and the completion date is December 2031," the source said.

**Key Issues in the Proposal**

**1. Nature of the Plan**

- The proposal involved releasing 500 cusecs of Ganga water from the Upper Ganga Canal (UGC) into the Eastern Yamuna Canal (EYC).
- Since the UGC is not directly connected to the Yamuna, water had to be diverted through an existing channel and then into the Yamuna, eventually flowing through Delhi.
- Delhi would not use this water for drinking; U.P. would recover it downstream via the Agra Canal.

**2. Concerns Raised by Uttar Pradesh**

**a. Farmer Protests**

- Water diverted through three U.P. districts would pass by farmlands.
- Farmers may oppose water passing through their region without being allowed to use it.
- This socio-political concern remains unresolved since July 2025.

**b. Engineering Challenges**

- Major re-engineering is required for the diversion path.
- A committee has been formed to examine these technical concerns.
- IIT Roorkee has been asked to study and upgrade the Deoband channel.

**3. Delays in Yamuna Cleaning Efforts**

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) in 2015 mandated a comprehensive plan to ensure environmental flows in the Yamuna, setting a deadline of March 31, 2017—which remains unmet.
- Studies recommend 23 cumecs as minimum ecological flow after the Hathnikund Barrage.
    - Actual flow is only 10 cumecs, far below ecological norms.

**4. Long-Term Solution: Construction of New Dams**

- Three new dams in the upper Yamuna basin have been proposed to store monsoon flows and release water during lean seasons.
- Only one dam has begun construction; expected completion is by December 2031.
- Until then, the Ganga diversion plan was viewed as a stop-gap measure.

**Conclusion**

The roadblocks in diverting Ganga water to rejuvenate the Yamuna underscore deeper structural issues—inter-State coordination failures, farmer-related political sensitivities, inadequacies in water infrastructure, and chronic delays in environmental compliance. While the plan offered temporary relief, sustainable revival of the Yamuna demands long-term hydrological solutions, timely completion of planned dams, and stronger Centre-State cooperation. Effective river rejuvenation hinges not merely on engineering interventions but on integrated, cooperative water governance across the Indo-Gangetic basin.

## UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques**: **With reference to the recent proposal to divert Ganga water into the Yamuna, consider the following statements:**

1. The Upper Ganga Canal (UGC) is directly connected to the Yamuna.

2. The diverted water was to be recovered by Uttar Pradesh through the Agra Canal.

3. Delhi Jal Board was supposed to use the diverted water for drinking water supply.

**Which of the statements is/are correct?**

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: b)**

## UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques:** Evaluate the role of infrastructural projects such as dams and canals in ensuring ecological flow in rivers. In light of the Upper Yamuna dam projects, discuss their potential and limitations in restoring river health. **(150 Words)**

## Page 07 : GS 3 : Environment / Prelims

India is witnessing an escalating crisis of human–wildlife conflict, reflecting the growing pressures of development, habitat fragmentation, and shrinking ecological buffers. Increasing encounters between wildlife and human communities are not only resulting in casualties on both sides but are also threatening India's conservation commitments and the survival of several keystone species. The issue highlights a deep tension between economic development and ecological sustainability.

# Man-animal conflict frays India's wildlife conservation principles

**The Hindu Bureau**
NEW DELHI

THE HINDU
CARE COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

India's countryside continues to witness a deepening crisis of human-wildlife conflict, with increasing instances of wild animals straying into farmland and towns that often result in deaths of both wildlife and people, and calls to 'contain' animal numbers.

In many parts of Assam, Odisha, Karnataka and other States, farmers now regularly report herds of wild elephants entering paddy, sugarcane or banana fields during the night. According to a report by the World Wide Fund for Nature and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), this kind of human-wildlife conflict has become "one of the main threats to the long-term survival of many emblematic species in India."

As India's infrastructural footprint expands, natural habitats shrink and become fragmented. That fragmentation forces animals to cross into human-dominated landscapes in search of food or migration routes, raising the odds of conflict.

About 186 elephants were killed after being hit by trains across India between 2009-10 and 2020-21, according to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

As per the data furnished by the Project Elephant Division of the Ministry, Assam accounted for the highest number of elephant casualties on railway tracks (62), followed by West Bengal (57), and Odisha (27).

"Within a human lifetime, we have witnessed extraordinary and unprecedented changes to our planet," warns Margaret Kinnaird, Global Wildlife Practice Leader at WWF Global. "Human-wildlife conflict, in tandem with other threats, has decimated species that were once common – and pushed rarer ones to the brink."

Agriculture near forests draws elephants into human fields, increasing conflict. Villages in the vicinity of several tiger reserves in India have seen instances of crop raids by nilgai, deer and bison, prompting calls by angry locals to declare these species as 'vermin'.

Meanwhile, sensitive scavengers such as vultures suffer silently. Once numbering in the tens of millions across South Asia, several vulture species have seen catastrophic declines – over 95% in some species – driven by a combination of habitat disruption, poisoning from veterinary drugs, and disturbance around their traditional carcass-feeding sites. Without vultures to dispose of animal carcasses, rural India has witnessed a rise in rotting carcasses, stray dogs, and associated public health risks.

Recognising the urgency, the Centre has rolled out a national-level strategy. The National Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Strategy and Action Plan seeks to address key drivers of conflict – habitat fragmentation, damaged corridors, and retaliatory killing – by promoting mitigation measures, data-driven monitoring, and stronger habitat protection.

**Key Issues Emerging from the Report**

**1. Rising Conflicts Across States**

- States such as **Assam, Odisha, Karnataka, and West Bengal** have reported frequent incidents of wildlife entering agricultural lands.
- **Elephants**, in particular, stray into paddy, sugarcane, and banana fields, causing crop loss and triggering violent backlash from local communities.
- According to WWF–UNEP, human–wildlife conflict has become **one of the major threats to long-term survival** of species like elephants, tigers, deer, nilgai, and vultures.

**2. Habitat Fragmentation due to Infrastructure Expansion**

- Rapid expansion of highways, railways, mining, and urban settlements has led to:
  - **Shrinking forests**
  - **Fragmented corridors**
  - **Disruption of migratory routes**
- Fragmented landscapes force animals to traverse human-dominated spaces in search of food or safe passage.

**3. Collision Deaths: Railway Lines as a Major Killer**

- Between **2009–10 and 2020–21**, **186 elephants** were killed by trains.
  - Assam: **62**
  - West Bengal: **57**
  - Odisha: **27**
- These deaths expose poor coordination between forest departments and railway authorities and the absence of effective wildlife-safe infrastructure.

**4. Local Communities Under Pressure**

- Crop depredation by **nilgai, deer, bison**, and elephants has triggered demands to declare some species as **"vermin"**, enabling mass culling.
- Such demands reflect:
  - Economic frustration
  - Erosion of tolerance toward wildlife
  - Declining faith in compensation systems

**5. Silent Ecological Crisis: The Decline of Vultures**

- Once widespread in India, vulture populations have dropped by **over 95%**.
- Causes include:
    - Exposure to **veterinary drugs** like diclofenac
    - Loss of safe feeding grounds
    - Habitat disturbance
- Declining vultures have caused:
    - Increase in **rotting carcasses**
    - Surge in **stray dog population**
    - Higher **public health risks** (rabies, zoonoses)

**6. Policy Response: National Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Strategy**

The Centre's national strategy proposes:

- **Strengthening wildlife corridors** to ensure safe movement
- **Restoring degraded habitats**
- **Improving data-driven monitoring** of conflict hotspots
- **Reducing retaliatory killings** through better compensation, community engagement
- **Science-based mitigation**: sensor-based detection near tracks, early warning systems, fencing, alternative livelihoods

While promising, implementation remains the critical challenge.

**Conclusion**

The deepening man–animal conflict in India signals a fundamental stress point in India's conservation model: development has outpaced ecological planning. Sustainable mitigation demands a landscape-level approach that restores corridors, integrates local communities into conservation frameworks, and balances economic aspirations with ecological integrity. Without urgent action, India risks losing both biodiversity and the trust of people who coexist with wildlife every day.

## UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques : Consider the following statements:**

1. Habitat fragmentation is one of the major drivers of human–wildlife conflict in India.

2. Elephant deaths on railway tracks are highest in Assam.

3. Vulture population decline in India has been primarily due to habitat loss alone.

**Which of the statements is/are correct?**

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 2 and 3 only

C. 1 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: a)**

## UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques :** India's growing human–wildlife conflict reflects deeper ecological and governance failures. Examine the causes and consequences of the rising man–animal conflict in India. Suggest sustainable mitigation strategies. **(150 words)**

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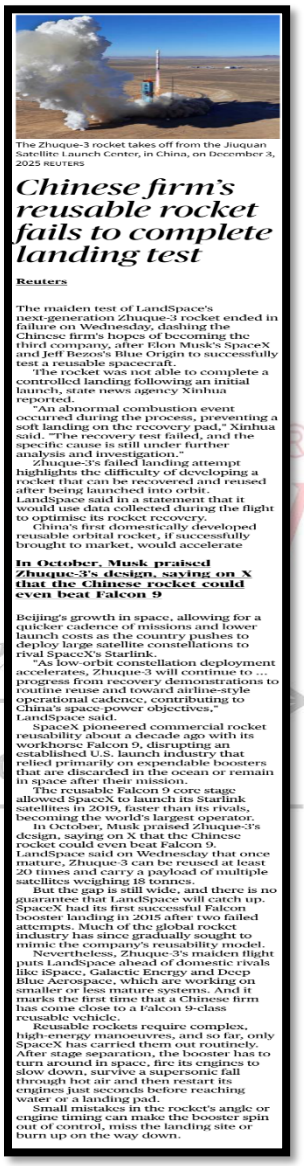
## Page : 07 : GS 3 : Science and Tech / Prelims

China's private space sector suffered a setback after LandSpace's Zhuque-3 reusable rocket failed to complete its maiden controlled landing test. The incident highlights both the challenges of reusable rocket technology and China's broader ambition to compete with global leaders—particularly SpaceX—in the commercial space launch market.



The Zhuque-3 rocket takes off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center, in China, on December 3, 2025 REUTERS

*Chinese firm's reusable rocket fails to complete landing test*

Reuters

The maiden test of LandSpace's next-generation Zhuque-3 rocket ended in failure on Wednesday, dashing the Chinese firm's hopes of becoming the third company, after Elon Musk's SpaceX and Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin to successfully test a reusable spacecraft.

The rocket was not able to complete a controlled landing following an initial launch, state news agency Xinhua reported.

"An abnormal combustion event occurred during the process, preventing a soft landing on the recovery pad," Xinhua said. "The recovery test failed, and the specific cause is still under further analysis and investigation."

Zhuque-3's failed landing attempt highlights the difficulty of developing a rocket that can be recovered and reused after being launched into orbit.

LandSpace said in a statement that it would use data collected during the flight to optimise its rocket recovery.

China's first domestically developed reusable orbital rocket, if successfully brought to market, would accelerate

**In October, Musk praised Zhuque-3's design, saying on X that the Chinese rocket could even beat Falcon 9**

Beijing's growth in space, allowing for a quicker cadence of missions and lower launch costs as the country pushes to deploy large satellite constellations to rival SpaceX's Starlink.

"As low-orbit constellation deployment accelerates, Zhuque-3 will continue to ... progress from recovery demonstrations to routine reuse and toward airline-style operational cadence, contributing to China's space power objectives," LandSpace said.

SpaceX pioneered commercial rocket reusability about a decade ago with its workhorse Falcon 9, disrupting an established U.S. launch industry that relied primarily on expendable boosters that are discarded in the ocean or remain in space after their mission.

The reusable Falcon 9 core stage allowed SpaceX to launch its Starlink satellites in 2019, faster than its rivals, becoming the world's largest operator.

In October, Musk praised Zhuque-3's design, saying on X that the Chinese rocket could even beat Falcon 9.

LandSpace said on Wednesday that once mature, Zhuque-3 can be reused at least 20 times and carry a payload of multiple satellites weighing 18 tonnes.

But the gap is still wide, and there is no guarantee that LandSpace will catch up. SpaceX had its first successful Falcon booster landing in 2015 after two failed attempts. Much of the global rocket industry has since gradually sought to mimic the company's reusability model.

Nevertheless, Zhuque-3's maiden flight puts LandSpace ahead of domestic rivals like iSpace, Galactic Energy and Deep Blue Aerospace, which are working on smaller or less mature systems. And it marks the first time that a Chinese firm has come close to a Falcon 9-class reusable vehicle.

Reusable rockets require complex, high-energy manoeuvres, and so far, only SpaceX has carried them out routinely. After stage separation, the booster has to turn around in space, fire its engines to slow down, survive a supersonic fall through hot air and then restart its engines just seconds before reaching water or a landing pad.

Small mistakes in the rocket's angle or engine timing can make the booster spin out of control, miss the landing site or burn up on the way down.

### Key Points and Significance

#### 1. What Happened?

- LandSpace attempted the first landing test of its next-gen reusable rocket, Zhuque-3, from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center.
- The rocket launched successfully but failed during the controlled landing phase.
- Xinhua reported an "abnormal combustion event" leading to a failed soft landing.

This failure mirrors the early challenges faced by SpaceX during initial Falcon 9 landing attempts (2015).

#### 2. Why Is Reusability So Difficult?

Reusable rockets must perform complex manoeuvres:

- Booster flip after stage separation
- Engine reignition at high altitude
- Surviving supersonic descent and intense heating
- Final landing burn within seconds of touchdown

Any deviation in thrust, timing, or angle can cause:

- Spinning out of control
- Missing the landing pad
- Structural burn-up

So far, SpaceX is the only company to routinely achieve this.

#### 3. Why Zhuque-3 Matters for China?

If perfected, the rocket would be:

- China's first domestically developed reusable orbital-class rocket
- Able to carry 18 tonnes of payload
- Reusable up to 20 times (as claimed by LandSpace)
- Central to China's plan to deploy large Low-Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite constellations, competing with:
    - SpaceX's Starlink
    - Amazon Kuiper
    - European IRIS²

Reusable rockets dramatically reduce launch costs and increase mission frequency—critical for constellation deployment.

**4. China's Private Space Race**

Zhuque-3 puts LandSpace ahead of domestic competitors:

- iSpace
- Galactic Energy
- Deep Blue Aerospace

But the gap with SpaceX remains large. Even Elon Musk acknowledged Zhuque-3's design as promising, but actual capability depends on multiple successful landings—something China has yet to achieve.

**5. Broader Implications**

**a. Geopolitical Competition in Space**

Reusable rockets → cheaper launches → faster deployment of communication satellites → strategic advantage in:

- Broadband internet
- Navigation
- Surveillance
- Military communication

China aims to counterbalance Starlink, which has geopolitical significance in conflicts (e.g., Ukraine war).

**b. Lessons for India**

India has:

- ISRO's Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) programme
- Growing private sector players (Skyroot, Agnikul)

China's rapid progress underscores the urgency for India to accelerate R&D and commercialization of reusable launch technologies.



**Conclusion**

The failed landing of Zhuque-3 underscores the inherent complexities of reusable rocket engineering but does not diminish China's accelerated push toward cost-effective space access. While the setback delays China's ambitions to rival SpaceX, the maiden flight marks a major milestone for its private space industry. For India, such developments highlight the strategic importance of investing in reusability and leveraging private innovation to remain competitive in the evolving global space ecosystem.

## UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques: Consider the following statements about reusable rockets:**

1. They require multiple engine re-ignitions during descent.

2. hey significantly reduce the cost of launching satellites.

3. Only government space agencies have successfully tested reusable orbital rockets.

**Which of the statements is/are correct?**

(a) 1 and 2 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 3 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

**Ans: a)**

## UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques :** Examine the strategic implications of China's push for reusable rockets for global geopolitics and India's space programme. **(250 words)**

## Page 08 : GS 3 : Disaster Management

Cyclone Ditwah has once again exposed the intensifying vulnerability of South Asian coastal regions to extreme weather events. While Sri Lanka suffered devastating human loss and widespread flooding, the cyclone's remnants also crippled Chennai, revealing deep structural and planning gaps in India's urban flood management. The editorial highlights how climate-driven storms now outpace the preparedness of even major metropolitan centres.

**Key Analysis**

**1. Sri Lanka's Severe Impact**

- Over 14 lakh people affected and 474 deaths underscore Ditwah's destructive scale.
- The cyclone's "slow crawl"—hovering over the same areas for days—created unprecedented flooding.
- This highlights a pattern seen in recent climate events: slower-moving cyclones, fuelled by warming oceans, cause prolonged rainfall and higher cumulative damage.

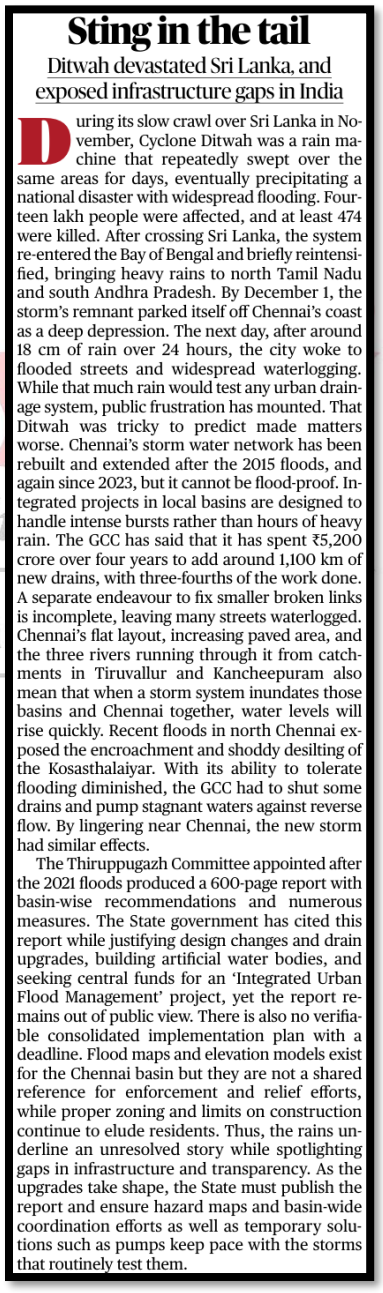
**2. Chennai's Flood Crisis: A Recurring Pattern**

Despite drainage upgrades after the 2015 floods and again since 2023, Chennai faced:

- 18 cm of rainfall in 24 hours
- Severe waterlogging
- Blocked roads, power outages, and drain backflow

**Reasons:**

1. **Urban Design Constraints**
    - Flat topography
    - Paved surfaces reducing infiltration
    - Three rivers carrying runoff from Tiruvallur & Kancheepuram into the basin
    - Increased encroachment on waterways (e.g., Kosasthalaiyar)
2. **Stormwater Infrastructure Gaps**



**Sting in the tail**

Ditwah devastated Sri Lanka, and exposed infrastructure gaps in India

During its slow crawl over Sri Lanka in November, Cyclone Ditwah was a rain machine that repeatedly swept over the same areas for days, eventually precipitating a national disaster with widespread flooding. Fourteen lakh people were affected, and at least 474 were killed. After crossing Sri Lanka, the system re-entered the Bay of Bengal and briefly reintensified, bringing heavy rains to north Tamil Nadu and south Andhra Pradesh. By December 1, the storm's remnant parked itself off Chennai's coast as a deep depression. The next day, after around 18 cm of rain over 24 hours, the city woke to flooded streets and widespread waterlogging. While that much rain would test any urban drainage system, public frustration has mounted. That Ditwah was tricky to predict made matters worse. Chennai's storm water network has been rebuilt and extended after the 2015 floods, and again since 2023, but it cannot be flood-proof. Integrated projects in local basins are designed to handle intense bursts rather than hours of heavy rain. The GCC has said that it has spent ₹5,200 crore over four years to add around 1,100 km of new drains, with three-fourths of the work done. A separate endeavour to fix smaller broken links is incomplete, leaving many streets waterlogged. Chennai's flat layout, increasing paved area, and the three rivers running through it from catchments in Tiruvallur and Kancheepuram also mean that when a storm system inundates those basins and Chennai together, water levels will rise quickly. Recent floods in north Chennai exposed the encroachment and shoddy desilting of the Kosasthalaiyar. With its ability to tolerate flooding diminished, the GCC had to shut some drains and pump stagnant waters against reverse flow. By lingering near Chennai, the new storm had similar effects.

The Thiruppugazh Committee appointed after the 2021 floods produced a 600-page report with basin-wise recommendations and numerous measures. The State government has cited this report while justifying design changes and drain upgrades, building artificial water bodies, and seeking central funds for an 'Integrated Urban Flood Management' project, yet the report remains out of public view. There is also no verifiable consolidated implementation plan with a deadline. Flood maps and elevation models exist for the Chennai basin but they are not a shared reference for enforcement and relief efforts, while proper zoning and limits on construction continue to elude residents. Thus, the rains underline an unresolved story while spotlighting gaps in infrastructure and transparency. As the upgrades take shape, the State must publish the report and ensure hazard maps and basin-wide coordination efforts as well as temporary solutions such as pumps keep pace with the storms that routinely test them.

- The GCC added 1,100 km of drains costing ₹5,200 crore
- But broken links and incomplete networks keep streets vulnerable
- The system manages short intense spells, not hours-long rainfall

3. Poor Basin-Wide Coordination
   - When catchments upstream flood simultaneously with Chennai, the city's capacity collapses.
4. Encroachment & Poor Maintenance
   - Shoddy desilting
   - Blocked channels
   - Encroached floodplains reducing natural buffering capacity

**3. Institutional Failure: Missing Transparency and Coordination**

**Thiruppugazh Committee Report**

- Prepared after the 2021 floods (600 pages)
- Contains basin-wise recommendations and an integrated flood management model
- The State cites this report when seeking funds
- Yet the report is not publicly available, hindering accountability

**Key Issues:**

- No consolidated implementation timeline
- Flood maps and Digital Elevation Models (DEM) exist but are not used uniformly for planning, enforcement, zoning, or relief
- Poor public communication and weak institutional transparency

**4. Broader Lessons for India**

Cyclone Ditwah is part of a larger climate trend:

- More frequent, intense, and slow-moving cyclones
- Urban centres with outdated drainage networks face repeated collapse

- Lack of integrated urban flood management remains a national issue (seen in Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad earlier)

**Conclusion**

Cyclone Ditwah underlines the widening gap between climate risks and urban preparedness in South Asia. While Chennai has made significant infrastructure investments, fragmented planning, missing transparency, encroachments, and incomplete drainage networks continue to undermine resilience. As extreme rainfall events become more common, the State must urgently publish expert reports, enforce basin-wide planning, operationalise flood maps, and integrate temporary measures such as pumps with long-term system upgrades. Without such coordinated, transparent action, Chennai's recurring flood story will remain unresolved.

**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Ques :** Discuss the need for Integrated Urban Flood Management (IUFM) in India. What reforms are necessary to make metropolitan cities resilient to high-intensity rainfall?

## Page 11 : GS 1 : Indian History

B. R. Ambedkar remains one of India's most influential thinkers, yet contemporary political narratives often appropriate or oversimplify his ideas to suit electoral strategies. A new book by Valerian Rodrigues, Ambedkar's Political Philosophy: A Grammar of Public Life from the Social Margins, seeks to recentre Ambedkar within his moral, social, and political context. It argues that Ambedkar was not merely a constitutionalist or Dalit leader but a profound moral philosopher whose thought remains essential for understanding power, representation, and democracy in modern India.

**Key Themes and Arguments**

**1. Re-situating Ambedkar Beyond Political Tokenism**

- The current political regime often appropriates Ambedkar symbolically, detached from his radical critique of caste and Brahmanism.
- Rodrigues's book positions Ambedkar as a philosopher of the oppressed, whose work speaks to marginalised groups in any society, not just Dalits.
- He critiques how Congress historically sidelined uncomfortable truths about caste in favour of anti-colonial unity.

**2. Ambedkar as a Moral Philosopher**

- Ambedkar's writings reveal a deep moral vision of human nature, rooted in the belief that:
    - the oppressed can improve their conditions, and
    - even oppressors can reform within an enabling social structure.
- His politics is inseparable from a normative commitment to justice, fraternity, and equal dignity.

**3. Representation and Power: Ambedkar's Core Concerns**

**a. Mandate to represent**

- Rodrigues highlights Ambedkar's belief that oppressors cannot speak for the oppressed.
- During the Round Table Conferences, Ambedkar demanded separate electorates for Dalits to prevent caste Hindu domination.

**b. Rigged system under common electorates**

- After the Poona Pact, reservations existed only within common electorates.

- The 1937 elections saw Congress candidates win even in reserved seats—confirming Ambedkar's fear that the system catered to dominant social groups.
- Even the BSP—an Ambedkarite party—had to dilute its Dalit-centric agenda to gain broader electoral viability.

**4. Ambedkar's View on Nationalism and Democracy**

- Contrary to essentialised nationalism (identity based on territory, religion, race), Ambedkar linked nationalism to:
    - justice,
    - fraternity,
    - institutional safeguards,
    - and moral foundations.
- Electoral democracy without representation of the marginalised results in brute majoritarianism, where dominant identities are normalised.

**5. The Limits of the State and the Capture of Institutions**

- Rodrigues argues that Ambedkar saw the post-Independence state as captured by entrenched socio-economic elites.
- **Parliament**, rather than being a universal democratic space, became a site of group contestation dominated by upper castes.
- Without moral idealism, representative institutions reduce politics to vote-bank competition rather than justice-based governance.

**6. Ambedkar, Hinduism, and the Politics of Emancipation**

- Ambedkar's critique of Hinduism is often sanitised in mainstream narratives.
- He believed Hinduism structurally prevents emancipation for the oppressed, leading to his conversion to Buddhism.
- Contemporary "political Hinduism" mirrors Gandhi's earlier stance:
    - caste is seen as a social defect within Hinduism (not a structural system), and
    - symbolic gestures are prioritised over structural change.
- Rodrigues emphasises that reading Ambedkar fully exposes these limitations.

**Conclusion**

Ambedkar's legacy is too often simplified into symbolic gestures or selective readings that support present-day political narratives. Valerian Rodrigues's work reminds us that Ambedkar was a profound moral and political philosopher whose analyses of power, representation, nationalism, and caste remain crucial for understanding India's democracy today. His thought warns against majoritarian distortions, elitist capture of institutions, and superficial reforms that ignore structural injustice. In the Foucauldian sense, revisiting Ambedkar's ideas is not just about understanding the past but about diagnosing the present and envisioning a more just future.

## UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques** : **Consider the following statements regarding B.R. Ambedkar's political ideas:**

1. He supported separate electorates for the Depressed Classes during the Round Table Conferences.

2. He believed that nationalism should be based on identity markers like religion and territory.

3. He argued that caste oppression could be removed through symbolic acts rather than structural change.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

A. 1 only

B. 1 and 2 only

C. 2 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

**Ans : a)**

## UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques** : Common electorates have historically limited effective Dalit political representation. Discuss this argument with reference to Ambedkar's views and contemporary electoral politics. **(150 words)**

## Page : 08 : Editorial Analysis

# The climate is breaching the wall of urban metrics

People often discuss India's big metros as if they belong to the same category. Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata and Chennai are similar in age, scale and cultural importance and all four appear in rankings of "global" or "liveable" cities. Yet, anyone who has lived in them knows how much the security that they offer their residents during cyclones or extreme monsoon days differs. That divergence is not just an Indian curiosity but points to a deeper problem with how we define and measure "modern" urban life, and which recent floods across Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines made clear.

The UN-Habitat City Prosperity Index combines productivity, infrastructure, quality of life, equity, environmental sustainability and urban governance into a single picture. The Global Liveability Index scores cities on stability, health care, culture and environment, education and infrastructure. The City Resilience Index focuses on how well cities withstand and recover from shocks, including extreme weather, across health and well-being, economy and society, infrastructure and environment, and leadership and strategy.

While these approaches acknowledge that economic output, public services, social inclusion and environment all matter to urban welfare, they do not yet add up to a coherent way to judge whether a city actually affords its residents a "developed" life in a world in which the climate regularly breaches new extremes.

**The Asia floods**

Cyclone Ditwah brought intense rain to Sri Lanka, triggering flooding and landslides that killed over 400 people and displaced tens of thousands in Colombo and in densely populated countryside settlements. In Indonesia, cyclonic storms triggered floods and landslides across Sumatra, killing hundreds and destroying villages in river valleys and on steep slopes. Southern Thailand, including the city of Hat Yai, experienced rainfall reported to be the heaviest in centuries. The resulting floodwaters were several metres deep while national leaders also acknowledged failures in warning. In the Philippines, Typhoon Kalmaegi inundated parts of the Visayas region, including Cebu, leaving dozens dead and lakhs displaced.

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The impact of extreme natural events in Asia points to a deeper problem of how 'modern' urban life is being defined and measured

Hat Yai and Cebu are secondary cities integrated into national economies. Hill towns near Colombo are similarly linked to the capital's labour and commodity markets. Yet, many of the affected settlements do not appear on the major indices. This is because liveability rankings typically cover capital regions and a small set of global hubs while global city indices focus on financial and research functions. The first flaw is that the places that absorb much of the real risk of rapid urbanisation due to a changing climate are often excluded from the systems by which "modern" urban life is assessed.

**Shortcomings in liveability indices**

Where data does exist, the floods reveal a more structural problem. The grey infrastructure in the most affected places was designed for weaker storms and was quickly overwhelmed by more than 300 mm of rain in 24 hours. Early warning and evacuations were only partial, leaving families in south Thailand reportedly trapped on upper floors for two days. Landslides in Sri Lanka also struck at night.

However, liveability indices record whether a city has hospitals, schools, parks, and public transport but are nearly silent on whether drainage networks can handle 21st century cloudbursts, whether hillsides are free of construction, and whether there are safe and accessible alternatives to informal housing. Prosperity indices may measure the share of households in "durable" housing, yet rarely differentiate between a brick house on a stable terrace and one cut into an unstable slope.

These gaps matter because the assessment paradigms have become part of the way States and investors decide where to deploy capital. A city that scores well on connectivity and business climate may also pay scant attention to drainage or slope stability, yet still attract more investment, even if that investment deepens exposure in floodplains or unstable hillsides. Public officials who are aware of what "moves the needle" prioritise airports, metro lines, and waterfront promenades, all of which signal modernity, while the less visible work of desilting canals, maintaining culverts, enforcing building codes and relocating people towards sites of lower risk remains politically thankless.

**The inequity**

Because most indices use city-wide averages, they misprice risk and shift it to those with the lowest capacity to bear it. Rising land values and expanded infrastructure in flood-prone areas show up as higher prosperity and better access. When extreme rain arrives, wealthier residents benefit from better mobility and services and can often protect themselves with insurance while peri-urban settlers scramble in structures that crumble or flood first, even though they too live in a city assessed to be "modern".

International funds and technical assistance programmes often require cities to produce certain plans and indicators; cities that can already do this, which are typically larger and more prosperous, become the main recipients of adaptation support. Projects are then designed to satisfy reporting requirements, not necessarily to address the most acute local hazards. Eventually, the media and urban elites adopt the vocabulary of "top-10 most liveable", "world-class" or "smart" cities while planning curricula and engineering standards adopt global indices as reference points, embedding their biases into the next generation of urban professionals.

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**GS-1 & 3 : Social Issue and Environment**

**UPSC Mains Practice Question :** Current global liveability and prosperity indices fail to capture the real vulnerability of cities in a climate-stressed world. In the light of recent extreme weather events in Asia, discuss the limitations of urban liveability metrics and suggest measures to make urban planning more climate-resilient. **(250 words)**

# Context :

Urban liveability indices have become powerful tools that shape how cities market themselves, attract investment, and measure progress. However, recent floods across Asia — Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines — reveal a major flaw: the metrics used to evaluate "modern" or "developed" cities fail to account for the new realities of climate extremes. The article argues that global indices, though sophisticated, are inadequate in assessing how well cities protect their residents from climate-induced disasters.

**Key Issues and Analysis**

**1. The Problem: Urban Metrics Don't Reflect Climate Realities**

Cities such as Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, or Kolkata are often grouped together under standardised frameworks like:

- **UN-Habitat City Prosperity Index**
- **Global Liveability Index**
- **City Resilience Index**

These rankings measure productivity, quality of life, stability, and infrastructure. But they fail to measure:

- The city's ability to handle 300–500 mm rainfall events
- Hillside construction risks
- Drainage capacity
- Vulnerability of informal settlements : Thus, cities that appear "global" or "smart" on paper often collapse under climate stress.



**2. Lessons from the Asia Floods**

Major disasters triggered by Cyclone Ditwah (Sri Lanka), storms in Sumatra (Indonesia), floods in southern Thailand, and Typhoon Kalmaegi (Philippines) demonstrate three key patterns:

**a) Secondary cities face the highest climate risks**

Places like Hat Yai (Thailand) and Cebu (Philippines) are deeply integrated into national economies, yet they are excluded from global rankings, because these indices focus mainly on:

- Capital cities
- Global financial hubs

Thus, the actual hotspots of risk do not even appear in the global assessment systems.

**b) Infrastructure was designed for the past**

Flooded regions had drainage, slopes, and housing meant for older climatic patterns. Climate change has made:

- storms more intense,
- rainfall more concentrated,

- landslides more frequent.

Yet infrastructure standards have **not been updated**.

**c) Disaster warnings and governance proved weak**

Early warnings failed, evacuations were partial, and people were trapped. This shows that governance and preparedness — not just economic indicators — determine resilience.

**3. Shortcomings of Liveability and Prosperity Indices**

**a) They measure what is visible**

These indices appreciate:

- highways
- airports
- metros
- business climate
- parks

But rarely measure:

- drainage capacity
- slope stability
- wetland health
- encroachment on floodplains
- safety of informal housing

This creates a split between **a city's real resilience** and **its global ranking**.



**b) They distort investment and planning priorities**

Because investors and governments rely on these indices:

- Cities that score high attract more capital.
- But this capital often builds in **high-risk zones** like floodplains or reclaimed land.
- Local governments prioritise "visible modernity projects" (promenades, flyovers) over "invisible resilience work" (culvert cleaning, enforcing building codes).

This deepens vulnerability.

**4. The Inequity Dimension: Metrics Hide Social Vulnerability**

Most indices work with **city-wide averages**, which hide the unequal distribution of climate risks.

**Rich vs poor exposure**

- Wealthy residents have better mobility, insurance, and elevated housing.
- Peri-urban settlers or informal settlements are located in floodplains, unstable slopes, or drainage paths.
- When disasters hit, the poor face the maximum loss.

Yet both groups live in a city certified as "modern" and "liveable".

**Global funding bias**

International climate funds require cities to produce:

- detailed climate plans
- data
- institutional capacity

Large and wealthy cities meet these criteria, so they receive more funds, while secondary and vulnerable cities — which need funds more urgently — get left out.

**Long-term impact**

The vocabulary of "world-class", "top-10 liveable", "smart city" seeps into:

- media narratives
- governance discussions
- engineering education
- planning curriculums

Thus, future urban professionals enter the field with the same blind spots embedded in global assessment systems.

**Conclusion**

The article highlights a critical gap between the metrics that define urban modernity and the realities of a climate-stressed world. Current liveability and prosperity indices celebrate visible infrastructure and economic output but overlook the systems that protect life — drainage, slope stability, wetlands, safe housing, and climate governance. As extreme weather becomes more frequent, cities must rethink their planning paradigms, redefine what "liveability" means, and centre climate resilience and equity in urban design. Without this shift, cities may appear world-class on paper but remain dangerously fragile in practice.