

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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North India recently witnessed intense weather disturbances in the form of heavy rainfall, hailstorms, gusty winds in the plains, and substantial snowfall in the Himalayan and sub-Himalayan regions. These events disrupted air, road, and power connectivity across several States and Union Territories. Chief Ministers, including **Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu** and **Omar Abdullah**, closely monitored rescue and restoration operations, highlighting the administrative challenges posed by extreme climatic variability.

Heavy rain, snow lash north India; Chief Ministers monitor rescue, repair works

All flights to Srinagar cancelled; blocked roads, power outages in several States; police evacuate more than 100 passengers stranded in parts of J&K; restoration work being done on war footing, says Himachal Chief Minister Sukhu; 18-year-old student allegedly electrocuted in Punjab's Nabha city

Vikas Vasudeva
CHANDIGARH

Torrential rain, hailstorms, and gusty winds in the plains and heavy snow in the upper reaches of north India disrupted normal life across several States over the past two days.

The inclement weather caused power outages in many regions and forced the cancellation of all flights at Srinagar airport. Emergency response teams were pressed into action to rescue people stranded by low visibility and snow that accumulated to as much as two feet in some areas.

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Friday issued directions to officials concerned to work on a war footing to restore essential services in the areas that have been disrupted due to heavy snowfall.

J&K CM Omar Abdullah said efforts were on to restore the power supply in the Valley, which was severely hit by the gusty winds and heavy snow.

"Damage assessment is under way but would take some time owing to prevailing weather conditions," said Mr. Omar.



Standstill: (Clockwise from above) A farmer clearing snow from an apple tree in central Kashmir's Budgam district; a man riding along the banks of the Dal Lake in Srinagar; and vehicles stuck in a traffic jam on the Delhi-Gurugram Expressway on Friday. IMRAN NISSAR, REUTERS, PTI



danger avalanche warning on Friday for six districts of the Union territory.

'Mixed blessing'
Many agricultural experts also welcomed rain in Punjab and Haryana, terming it a relief after an extended dry period. Both States are major contributors of wheat to the Central pool. Experts said rain would boost the crop's growth during the ongoing rabi (winter) season.

"The rain spell will be beneficial for the crop as the long dry spell has ended. The rain would not only help the crop's growth but also reduce pressure on groundwater and assist in retaining soil moisture," P.S. Rangi, an agriculture expert and former Punjab State Farmers Commission adviser, told *The Hindu*.

"With the temperature likely to stay down in the days to come, it would be beneficial for wheat, which is a temperature-sensitive crop and thrives in cold conditions," he added.

Mr. Omar welcomed the snowfall in Srinagar, the first of the season. "We had been waiting for this for a long time," he said, adding the government prepares for the snow every year.

(With inputs from PTI)

Key Developments

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Daily News Analysis

Infrastructure and Connectivity Disruption:

All flights to Srinagar were cancelled, roads were blocked due to snow accumulation, and large-scale power outages occurred in Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Haryana.

Disaster Response and Rescue: Police and emergency agencies rescued over 100 stranded persons in border and mountainous areas such as Poonch and Udhampur, despite poor visibility and continuing snowfall.

Human Cost: An 18-year-old student's death due to electrocution in Nabha (Punjab) exposed vulnerabilities in urban electrical safety during heavy rainfall events.

Meteorological Assessment: The India Meteorological Department (IMD) reported widespread rainfall and hailstorms, with temperatures expected to remain below normal in the coming days.

Significance for UPSC

1. Climate Change and Extreme Weather (GS Paper III): The frequency and intensity of such extreme weather episodes reflect broader patterns associated with climate change, particularly in the Himalayan region, which is ecologically fragile and highly sensitive to temperature and precipitation anomalies.

2. Disaster Management and Governance :

The situation underscores the importance of early warning systems, inter-agency coordination, and last-mile connectivity in disaster response.

Avalanche warnings issued in J&K highlight the role of scientific forecasting and community preparedness.

3. Federalism and Cooperative Governance : Active involvement of State leadership and coordination with central agencies illustrates cooperative federalism during natural disasters.

4. Agriculture and Food Security: While disruptive, the rainfall proved beneficial for rabi crops, especially wheat in Punjab and Haryana. Experts termed it a "mixed blessing," as it improved soil moisture, reduced groundwater stress, and supported crop growth during a temperature-sensitive phase.

Challenges Highlighted

Fragile power and transport infrastructure in hilly regions

Urban safety lapses, particularly regarding exposed power lines

Limited resilience of mountain ecosystems to repeated extreme events

Way Forward

Strengthening climate-resilient infrastructure, especially in Himalayan States

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Improving urban drainage and electrical safety standards

Enhancing community-based disaster preparedness and real-time weather advisories

Integrating climate adaptation into agricultural and regional planning

Conclusion

The recent spell of heavy rain and snowfall in North India demonstrates the dual nature of extreme weather events—posing immediate humanitarian and infrastructural challenges while also offering long-term agricultural benefits.

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Extreme weather events in North India are becoming more frequent and intense. In this context, examine the challenges they pose to disaster management and infrastructure resilience in Himalayan and sub-Himalayan regions. **(150 Words)**



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Page 03 : GS II : Governance

Government data for 2024–25 reveals that India located **71 fugitives abroad**, the highest number in the last 12 years, reflecting a significant intensification of transnational law-enforcement efforts. The figures, released in the annual report of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), underline India's growing institutional capacity to trace economic offenders and other fugitives through diplomatic, legal, and policing mechanisms.

71 fugitives wanted by India located abroad in 2024-25, highest in 12 years

Vijaita Singh

NEW DELHI

As many as 71 fugitives wanted by India were located in a foreign country in 2024-25, the highest in the last 12 years, government data shows.

According to the 2024-25 annual report of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) located 71 people wanted by India in foreign countries, while 27 fugitives returned to India in the last financial year.

The CBI processed and gave comments on more than 22,200 applications for renunciation of Indian citizenship on the Ministry of Home Affairs portal. At a CBI conference last year, Union Home Minister Amit Shah had underscored the need for a ruthless approach to ensure the extradition of fugitives.

Over the previous decade, the number of fugitives traced to foreign

Global tracking

The CBI, via its Global Operations Centre, geo-locates wanted criminals and fugitives in coordination with foreign law enforcement agencies through INTERPOL channels and through the issuing of INTERPOL notices

Once their location is determined, the CBI works with enforcement agencies, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of External Affairs to bring back the fugitives

Fugitives wanted by India and located abroad*

71

Fugitives brought back to India*

27



Fugitives wanted by other countries and located in India*

203

*2024-2025

India has sent 137 extradition requests to foreign countries, the MEA said. Of these, 134 requests were accepted, with 125 of them still pending with foreign governments. Three requests were rejected.

"In the last five years, 25 fugitives have been successfully extradited to India," the MEA added.

The CBI's Global Operations Centre geo-locates wanted criminals and fugitives in cooperation with foreign law enforcement agencies, via Interpol channels and through the issue of Interpol notices.

During 2024-2025, there were 74 judicial requests, called letters rogatory, sent to foreign governments. There were 47 letters rogatory which were fully executed during 2024-2025, of which 42 were from the CBI and five were from other agencies.

As on March 31, 2025, a total of 533 letters rogatory were pending with other countries.

countries ranged between 15 in 2013 and 42 in 2015, before shooting up to 71 last year, according to previous DoPT reports.

The number of fugitives annually extradited or deported to India, on the other hand, ranged between 5 and 29, with the highest number recorded in 2023.

According to a Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) reply in Parliament on December 19, 2025, India has

signed extradition treaties with 48 countries and has extradition arrangements with 12 countries.

India is also party to multilateral conventions such as the United Nations Convention against Corruption, which can serve as a legal framework to bring back fugitive criminals from other countries which are also parties to these conventions.

Over the last five years,

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Key Facts and Developments

Central Bureau of Investigation located 71 fugitives abroad in 2024–25; 27 were brought back to India through extradition or deportation.

Over the past decade, the number of fugitives traced annually ranged between 15 and 42, before sharply increasing in 2024–25.

India has **extradition treaties with 48 countries** and **extradition arrangements with 12 countries**, as stated by the **Ministry of External Affairs**.

In the last five years, India sent **137 extradition requests**, of which 134 were accepted, though most remain pending with foreign governments.

India is a party to multilateral frameworks such as the **United Nations Convention against Corruption**, which provide legal backing for the return of fugitives.

The CBI's Global Operations Centre uses **Interpol** channels, including notices and coordination with foreign police agencies.

Judicial cooperation through **Letters Rogatory** remains extensive, with over 500 requests pending as of March 2025.

Significance

1. Internal Security and Transnational Crime : The data highlights India's proactive approach to tackling economic offences, corruption, and organised crime that operate across borders. It also reflects improved intelligence-sharing and geo-location capabilities.

2. International Relations and Diplomacy : Extradition is closely linked to diplomatic relations, mutual legal assistance treaties (MLATs), and trust between judicial systems. Delays in execution underline issues of sovereignty, human rights standards, and differences in legal systems.

3. Governance and Rule of Law : Statements by leaders such as **Amit Shah** emphasise political will to ensure accountability and deter financial crimes, reinforcing the credibility of India's justice system.

Challenges Highlighted

Long delays despite acceptance of extradition requests

Legal hurdles in foreign courts, including asylum claims and human rights concerns

High pendency of Letters Rogatory indicating procedural and capacity constraints

Way Forward

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Expanding extradition treaties and updating existing ones

Strengthening MLAT mechanisms and fast-tracking judicial cooperation

Enhancing capacity of specialised units like the CBI's Global Operations Centre

Leveraging multilateral conventions and digital evidence-sharing platforms

Conclusion

The record number of fugitives traced abroad in 2024–25 marks a qualitative shift in India's fight against transnational crime. While actual extraditions remain limited due to legal and diplomatic constraints, the trend demonstrates stronger global engagement, improved investigative capacity, and sustained political resolve.

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques : Analyse the role of extradition treaties, multilateral conventions, and institutions like the CBI and Interpol in addressing transnational crime. How do delays in extradition impact India's internal security and rule of law? **(150 Words)**

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Page 05 : GS III : Indian Economy / Prelims Exam

In response to multiple challenges facing India's fisheries sector — including export uncertainties due to tariff fluctuations and climatic impacts on aquaculture — the **Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying** has advised States to diversify both the types of species cultivated and the markets targeted. This initiative aims to make the sector more resilient, sustainable, and competitive globally.

Diversify your fish basket, Union govt. advises States

Fisheries Ministry also pushes for cultivation of a wider variety of species to reduce the risk of disease wiping out a single species; urges States to find new markets, adopt new technologies

A.M. Jigeesh
NEW DELHI

Given recent challenges in seafood exports due to tariff uncertainty and the impact of climate change, the Union Fisheries Ministry is advising States and the fishing industry to diversify their markets and their produce, to reduce the risk of disease and appeal to global customers.

In a recent meeting with State fisheries departments, farmers, fish workers, processors and exporters, the Ministry urged them to cultivate a wider range of species and adopt the latest farming practices, such as the integrated multi-trophic aquaculture to cultivate more fish in the same space, in order to access new global markets.

In fact, Union Fisheries and Animal Husbandry Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh recently chaired a meeting with envoys from countries seen as potential new markets.

Though invited, the United States was absent from the meeting, which was attended by representatives from more than 40 countries, including China, Rus-



To avoid farmers' dependency on whiteleg shrimp, scientists are working on improving two indigenous varieties. KOMMURI SRINIVAS

sia, Iran, Venezuela, Vietnam, and Saudi Arabia.

Reducing risk

A senior Ministry official said that a farmer dependent on one species faces a huge risk. If it is affected by disease, seeds of that particular species could spread from State to State. In 2006-2007, for instance, the white spot syndrome virus destroyed the farming of black tiger shrimp, the popular brackish water species *penaeus monodon*.

"We have been asking farmers to diversify their species. We have a lot of species with us, which have both domestic and international demand," the

official said. "We have asked States to promote species diversification in inland aquaculture by promoting scampi, tilapia, pangasius in place of varieties such as rohu (*Labeo rohita*) and catla (*Catla catla*) which do not have a global market presence. We will help States to create production and processing clusters where production, processing, value addition, and export could be done for the benefit of farmers and can create jobs locally," the official added.

To avoid farmers' dependency on *Litopenaeus vannamei* (whiteleg shrimp) and to ensure disease-free species, govern-

ment scientists are now working on improving two indigenous varieties — *Penaeus indicus* (Indian white prawn) and *Penaeus monodon* (giant tiger prawn).

"Both have good export markets. We are exporting these species to over 100 countries," the official said.

Global demand

The official said that there is huge international demand for certain finfish like seabass as its meat quality is good. Kerala's popular *karimeen*, or pearl spot, also has an international appeal.

"Both can be cultivated in brackish waters. We are now trying to develop this variety particularly in States such as Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan where in many parts, groundwater is saline. We want to turn the waste land into wealth land," the official added.

The Centre has also decided to help States in promoting seaweed marine cage culture, a common practice in China and Norway. "... Each State has its own fish eating culture. We will cultivate fish according to these culinary traditions," the official said.

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Key Government Directives

1. Diversification of Species and Risk Mitigation

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Daily News Analysis

Farmers' heavy reliance on a few species such as **whiteleg shrimp** (*Litopenaeus vannamei*) increases their risk of severe economic loss if disease outbreaks occur.

Experience from past epidemics like the **white spot syndrome virus** that devastated brackish-water shrimp cultivation highlights this vulnerability.

The Ministry has encouraged cultivation of a wider array of species — including scampi, tilapia, pangasius — particularly those with stronger export demand than traditional freshwater favorites such as rohu and catla.

Efforts are also underway to improve indigenous shrimp varieties like **Penaeus indicus** and **Penaeus monodon** to reduce dependency on imported shrimp species and broaden exportable products.

2. Adoption of Modern Farming Practices

States have been urged to adopt **integrated multi-trophic aquaculture (IMTA)** and other advanced technologies that allow more efficient use of space and diversify production within the same system.

These techniques can improve productivity while reducing environmental pressures inherent in intensive monoculture systems.

3. Market Expansion and Global Engagement

The Ministry has prompted States and industry stakeholders to identify and enter new export markets, and the Union Government has engaged with envoys from over 40 countries to explore cooperation and trade opportunities.

Expanding into new markets is seen as essential to mitigate risks associated with tariff uncertainty in traditional destinations.

4. Value Addition and Market Infrastructure Support

Broader promotional measures by the Government aim to strengthen value chains, including cold chain facilities, processing units, and infrastructure under schemes such as the **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**.

Initiatives like reduced GST rates on value-added fish products support competitiveness and domestic consumption, complementing diversification goals.

Significance for UPSC

1. Agriculture and Allied Sectors : This policy reflects the need for resilience and sustainability in the fisheries sector — a key component of India's agricultural and allied economy. Diversification mitigates systemic risk from disease outbreaks and climate variability, aligning with broader goals of sustainable food production.

2. International Trade and Exports: Promotion of new markets and diversification of export products link directly to India's external sectors and trade diplomacy. Engagement with diplomatic channels for market access shows integration of economic and foreign policy instruments.

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3. Innovation and Technology Adoption

Encouraging adoption of advanced aquaculture systems such as IMTA, along with state-level and private sector collaboration on technology transfer and research, highlights institutional emphasis on modernizing traditional sectors.

4. Schemes and Policy Implementation: Diversity initiatives are embedded within flagship schemes such as PMMSY, showing the government's use of financial instruments and policy tools to achieve strategic outcomes in rural development and export growth.

Challenges Identified

Ecological and Disease Risks: Intensifying diversification while maintaining biosecurity requires stronger regulatory and monitoring mechanisms.

Infrastructure Gaps: Effective cold chains and market linkages remain uneven across States.

Adoption Barriers: Small-scale farmers may face difficulties in adopting high-technology systems without adequate support mechanisms.

Conclusion

The Union Government's advisories on diversifying the fish basket signal a strategic shift in India's fisheries policy — balancing risk management, market expansion, and technology-led productivity.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: The Union Government's recent advisory to States on diversifying aquaculture production is primarily aimed at:

1. Reducing dependence on a single species and disease-related risks
2. Increasing inland fisheries' contribution to global exports
3. Promoting climate-resilient and sustainable aquaculture practices

Which of the above statements are correct?

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

Ans: (d)

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Page 05 : GS III : Indian Economy / Prelims Exam

India's ambition to become a global hub for next-generation battery manufacturing has encountered significant implementation hurdles. A recent report by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis and JMK Research and Analytics highlights delays and structural constraints affecting the Advanced Chemistry Cell-Production Linked Incentive (ACC-PLI) Scheme, launched in 2021 to catalyse domestic battery manufacturing and support the electric vehicle (EV) transition.

Ambitious scheme to spur next-generation battery manufacturing in India hits hurdle

Jacob Koshy
 NEW DELHI

Delays in visa approvals for Chinese technical specialists, requirements that mandate local manufacturing, and the lack of critical technologies threaten the government's ambitious Advanced Chemistry Cell Production Linked Incentive (ACC-PLI) scheme, says a report by research firms Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis and JMK Research and Analytics released earlier this week. The scheme was launched in October 2021 to catalyse domestic, next-generation battery manufacturing.

As of October 2025, however, only 1.4 gigawatt-hour (GWh) worth of battery cells have been commissioned on time while 8.6 GWh is under development, but delayed. The 2021 plan had envisaged



Losing steam: While several companies flocked to bid for 50 GWh capacity at auctions, only 30 GWh was effectively allotted. FILE PHOTO

battery cell-manufacturing capacity of 50 GWh by 2026.

Advanced Chemistry Cells are components of modern batteries using technologies such as lithium-ion to run electric vehicles and are different from the classical lead-acid batteries that start a car or run inverters.

The ACC-PLI scheme, launched by the Ministry of Heavy Industries, pro-

mised emergent battery manufacturers, who won an auction, a certain amount of money for every battery they sold, as a way to incentivise investment in the sector.

The government's scheme also aimed to build a local battery supply chain and accelerate electric vehicle (EV) and energy storage adoption.

Currently, China is the dominant supplier of such

cells and one of the aims of the scheme is to reduce India's dependence on the country. With an outlay of ₹18,100 crore (\$2.08 billion), the ACC-PLI sought to attract large companies by mandating a minimum investment of ₹1,100 crore (\$129.3 million). In return, companies would receive maximum subsidy of ₹2,000 per kWh. Another mandate was that the companies should ensure 25% of the manufacturing was local within two years, and 60% within five years.

Huge interest

While several companies flocked to bid for 50 GWh capacity in the initial round of auctions, only 30 GWh was effectively allotted. Ola Electric, Reliance New Energy, Hyundai Global, and Rajesh Exports emerged as the selected beneficiaries, though Hyundai Global eventually

dropped out. None of the selected companies actually had expertise in battery manufacturing. Companies that had such experience – Amara Raja and Exide Industries – though in traditional lead-acid ones, were priced out of the auction. "The high net-worth requirement (a minimum of ₹2.25 billion per GWh) further restricted participation to large corporates," the report notes.

Because none of the three companies have started selling batteries, zero incentives have been disbursed against the targeted ₹2,900 crore by October 2025.

"India lacks a mature cell manufacturing ecosystem, including critical mineral refining and cell component production, which leaves the industry almost entirely dependent on imports from China," the report underlines.

Background of the ACC-PLI Scheme

Launched by the **Ministry of Heavy Industries** in October 2021

Total outlay: **₹18,100 crore**

Target: **50 GWh battery cell manufacturing capacity by 2026**

Incentive: up to **₹2,000 per kWh** of batteries sold

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Daily News Analysis

Mandatory localisation:

25% local value addition within 2 years

60% within 5 years

The scheme aimed to reduce India's dependence on imports—particularly from **China**, the dominant global supplier of lithium-ion battery cells—and to strengthen the domestic EV and energy storage ecosystem.

Key Findings and Current Status

As of October 2025:

Only **1.4 GWh** commissioned on time

8.6 GWh under development but delayed

Of the 50 GWh auctioned, only **30 GWh** was effectively allotted

Beneficiaries included **Ola Electric, Reliance New Energy, Hyundai Global** (later withdrew), and **Rajesh Exports**

No incentives disbursed so far, as no company has begun commercial battery sales

Core Challenges Highlighted

1. Technological and Skill Deficit : India lacks a mature battery cell manufacturing ecosystem, including critical mineral refining and component manufacturing. Delays in visas for Chinese technical experts have further slowed technology transfer.

2. Design Flaws in PLI Auctions :

High net-worth requirements restricted participation to large conglomerates

Companies with prior battery experience, such as **Amara Raja** and **Exide Industries**, were priced out

Selected firms lacked direct expertise in advanced battery technologies

3. Import Dependence and Supply Chain Risks: Despite the localisation mandate, India remains heavily dependent on Chinese imports for cells, components, and critical minerals, undermining strategic autonomy.

4. EV Transition and Climate Goals : Delays in battery manufacturing could slow EV adoption, affecting India's climate commitments and energy transition goals.

Significance

Industrial Policy: Demonstrates limits of incentive-led manufacturing without ecosystem readiness

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Energy Security: Highlights strategic vulnerabilities in critical technologies

Make in India & Atmanirbhar Bharat: Shows need for phased capability-building rather than capacity targets alone

Governance: Importance of aligning policy design with market realities and technological constraints

Way Forward

Developing a comprehensive battery ecosystem covering mining, refining, and recycling

Flexible localisation timelines linked to technology readiness

Greater support for experienced domestic manufacturers and MSMEs

Strategic international collaborations beyond a single-country dependency

Investment in R&D and skill development for advanced battery technologies

Conclusion

The hurdles faced by the ACC-PLI scheme underline that financial incentives alone cannot fast-track complex, technology-intensive manufacturing sectors. For India to succeed in next-generation battery manufacturing, policy must move beyond capacity creation to ecosystem development, technological capability, and strategic supply-chain resilience.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: Advanced Chemistry Cells (ACC), often mentioned in the context of electric vehicles, differ from conventional batteries because they:

- (a) Are based only on lead-acid technology
- (b) Are primarily used for grid-scale thermal power plants
- (c) Use advanced electrochemical technologies such as lithium-ion
- (d) Do not require critical minerals

Ans: c)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: India's ambition to achieve self-reliance in electric vehicle battery manufacturing faces structural constraints. Discuss in the context of the ACC-PLI scheme. (150 Words)

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Page 06 : GS II : International Relations

In an era marked by geopolitical uncertainty, trade protectionism, and weakening alliance assurances, the deepening engagement between India and the European Union (EU) has acquired renewed strategic significance. The forthcoming visit of Ursula von der Leyen and António Luís Santos da Costa to New Delhi—coinciding with India's 77th Republic Day and the 16th India-EU Summit—symbolises more than diplomatic optics. It reflects an alignment of intent between two actors seeking strategic autonomy and resilience in a divided world.

India and the EU – a fit partnership in a divided world

In geopolitics, clarity is rare. But when it arrives, it demands action. Both are now embodied within the deepening relationship between the European Union (EU) and India as the two sides prepare for the upcoming visit of the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, and the President of the European Council, António Luís Santos da Costa, New Delhi. As chief guests at India's 77th Republic Day on January 26, 2026, and co-chairs of the 16th India-EU Summit on January 27, their presence is more than ceremonial. It is an alignment of intent. The optics of EU leaders standing alongside Prime Minister Narendra Modi at India's most symbolic national celebration will underscore the urgency of this moment.

India, once confident of its rapport with United States President Donald Trump, now finds itself in the crosshairs of America – hit with punitive tariffs and disparaging rhetoric, including being accused with the farcical charge of 'Modi's War' in Ukraine over Indian purchases of Russian oil. New Delhi has rejected this inflammatory rhetoric as "inaccurate and misleading", cautioning against "double standards", even as it insists that the partnership has survived many challenging transitions and will press forward on the basis of mutual respect and shared interests. Europe understands this rupture all too well. Today, the message is clear: alliances no longer guarantee protection, and strategic autonomy must take precedence over strategic patience.

A relationship with potential

For too long, the India-EU relationship has simmered with unrealised potential. The two sides have committed to strengthening the relationship but progress has remained episodic. It is often derailed by narrative wars over Russia and China, and by the simple reality that the two



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The two sides have the potential to write a new chapter in multilateralism

sides were more focused on their respective relationships with the U.S. But the new urgency behind this specific visit means that it could now result in relationship-defining outcomes.

What the FTA can deliver

First, India and the EU are in the final stages of negotiating a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) that has been sputtering along since 2007. It should be viewed as a geopolitical insurance policy. If realised to its full potential, the agreement could unlock major opportunities in textiles and apparel, where India seeks tariff reductions to boost exports to Europe; pharmaceuticals and chemicals, sectors where India's competitive edge can meet EU demand; automobiles and machinery, where Europe wants greater access to India's growing market; and digital and services trade, where India's IT sector could gain from regulatory harmonisation.

For India, the FTA is also about climate equity. One sticking point continues to be the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which levies a 20%-35% effective carbon charge on materials such as steel, aluminium, cement and fertilizers from India. India sees it as a non-tariff barrier that has the potential to erase the gains an FTA would provide. In the interest of both sides, Europe should be able to offer some relief to India on this front, while still ensuring that climate remains a top policy priority.

Second, while maximising cooperation in issues of trade and technology remains vital, perhaps the hardest and most necessary conversations lie in defence. Ms. Von der Leyen has called for a Security and Defence Partnership with India, on a par with Japan and South Korea. And while it is not headline-grabbing like the FTA, it is almost just as important. For the EU, it would offer access to India's defence market, and

the opportunity for co-production of defence equipment.

For India, it complements Mr. Modi's 'Make in India' initiative, which aims to transform India into a global manufacturing hub. It would also offer access to European technology and a framework for more joint exercises and coordination in the Indian Ocean.

As a template for the world

Finally, on a strategic level, the EU-India partnership could be a model for other nations as they recalibrate and search for new partners. With America's unpredictability and China's continued assertiveness, India and the EU could offer a model of relationship building that respects internal domestic sensitivities, while recognising the need for flexibility and pragmatism. At the heart of this alignment is a shared belief that sovereign choices must remain sovereign, and that neither Beijing, Moscow nor Washington should hold veto power over India or Europe's strategic decisions. India and the EU have paid the price of over-dependence – whether on Russian gas, Chinese markets or American security guarantees. Both also recognise the need for strategic autonomy, which is about enhancing flexibility, reducing over-exposure to over-dependence on certain countries, and amplifying each other's voices on the global stage.

India and the EU have the credibility, the capability and the capital to co-create a new chapter in multilateralism. If they choose to seize this moment and avoid the trappings of internal bureaucracy, the two sides could help realise a multipolar order that is resilient, equitable and sovereign.

The views expressed are personal

Context and Rationale

India's relations with traditional partners, particularly the United States, have witnessed strain amid tariff measures and sharp rhetoric over India's energy ties with Russia. At the same time, Europe has faced its own strategic shocks—from dependence on Russian gas to vulnerabilities exposed by global supply-chain disruptions. This convergence of experiences has reinforced a shared understanding: alliances are no longer sufficient; diversified and balanced partnerships are essential.

Key Pillars of the India-EU Engagement

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1. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) as a Geopolitical Tool

Negotiations on the India–EU FTA, ongoing since 2007, have entered a critical phase. Beyond economics, the FTA is increasingly viewed as a geopolitical insurance policy.

Gains for India: Improved market access for textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and IT-enabled services.

Gains for the EU: Greater access to India's expanding market in automobiles, machinery, and high-end manufacturing.

Key Challenge: The EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), perceived by India as a non-tariff barrier affecting carbon-intensive exports such as steel and cement. The issue brings climate equity and differentiated responsibilities into sharp focus.

2. Strategic and Defence Cooperation

A proposed Security and Defence Partnership—on the lines of EU partnerships with Japan and South Korea—signals maturation of ties beyond trade.

For the EU, India offers a large defence market and a credible Indo-Pacific partner.

For India, cooperation aligns with the Make in India initiative, enabling defence co-production, technology access, and greater maritime coordination in the Indian Ocean region.

3. Strategic Autonomy and Multipolarity

Both India and the EU increasingly emphasise strategic autonomy—reducing over-dependence on any single power while retaining freedom of choice. This shared outlook distinguishes their partnership from bloc-based alignments and allows cooperation without vetoes from external actors such as the U.S., China, or Russia.

Challenges Ahead

Bureaucratic inertia on both sides

Divergent regulatory and environmental standards

Managing differences over Russia, China, and climate policies

Conclusion

The India–EU partnership today stands at a potential inflection point. With credibility, capital, and complementary capabilities, both sides can shape a pragmatic model of cooperation suited to a multipolar world—one that balances economic integration, strategic autonomy, and respect for sovereign choices. If translated from intent into action, this relationship could emerge as a stabilising pillar of global governance and a template for future partnerships in an increasingly fragmented international system.

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques : In a world marked by strategic uncertainty and weakening traditional alliances, India–EU relations are acquiring renewed relevance. Discuss the factors driving the convergence between India and the European Union. How can this partnership contribute to a multipolar and rules-based global order? (150 Words)

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Delimitation after 2027, redrawing power in India

Every democracy must periodically redraw its electoral map to reflect population change. In India, this process is known as delimitation. On paper, it is a routine constitutional adjustment. In reality, the next delimitation exercise – due after Census 2027 – will be the most consequential redrawing of political power since Independence. It will redefine how seats are distributed in the Lok Sabha and how India understands fairness, federalism and regional balance.

The Constitution required delimitation after every Census. But this principle has been suspended for nearly half a century. Inter-State distribution of Lok Sabha seats has remained unchanged since 1976, frozen at 1971 Census figures so that States would not be penalised for controlling population growth. The 84th Amendment in 2001 specified that redistribution would remain suspended until “the first census taken after the year 2026”.

That suspension effectively expires with Census 2027. At present, representation still rests on an India of 548 million people (1971), not today's 1.47 billion reality.

Delimitation is time consuming. India's four previous Commissions took between three and five-and-a-half years – and the last one (2002-08) only drew internal constituency boundaries without reallocating seats among States. The next Commission would probably reallocate seats among States for the first time since 1976, redraw all constituencies, and create reserved constituencies for women's 33% quota. Even if Census 2027 data is published in 2028, completing delimitation before 2031-32 seems impossible. As a result, women's reservation cannot be implemented before the 2034 elections. But we cannot rule out surprises.

The complexity around numbers
 In the 1970s, fertility rates across States were similar. Today, they have sharply diverged. The southern and western States achieved below-replacement fertility through investments in education, health and women's empowerment. Northern States such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar continue recording higher population growth. If population alone determines representation, States that controlled growth will lose political weight, while those that did not will gain significantly.

The numbers are stark. According to delimitation projections, if seats were allocated purely by population in an expanded Lok Sabha of approximately 888 members, Uttar Pradesh would rise from 80 to 151 seats and Bihar from 40 to 82 – just over 26% combined. Tamil Nadu would have 53 seats (from 39) and Kerala 23 (from 20). Though their absolute numbers rise, their share in the total Lok Sabha strength would fall from 7.2% to 6.0% and 3.7% to 2.6%, respectively, as the northern States gain



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disproportionately. This creates a moral paradox. Why should States be punished for good governance? For 50 years, India urged States to implement population control. Those who succeeded now stand to lose representation. The logic which forced the freeze in 1976 and 2001 is still valid.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah stated in 2025 that “not even one seat will be reduced” for any southern State. But this promise cannot offset the imbalance if northern States gain massively – or it may require suspending constitutionally mandated redistribution altogether, inviting legal challenge.

The arithmetic reveals a deeper complexity. Even if southern States retain their current seat numbers in an expanded House, their influence diminishes significantly. Parliament functions on absolute numbers, not proportions. When the combined strength of U.P. and Bihar rises to over a quarter of the House, the bargaining power of other regions inevitably declines – despite the promise being kept technically.

Options worth pondering over

There are six options that merit debate.

First, extend the current freeze beyond 2026, delaying redistribution until fertility rates converge. This preserves current balances but denies fast-growing States fair representation (a legitimate concern) and risks constitutional challenge under Article 14, as unequal representation based on 50-year-old data undermines the principle of equal suffrage.

Second, expand the Lok Sabha from 543 to, say, 750 or 888 seats, ensuring that no State loses seats; some gain more. However, proportional distribution means that larger States still get bigger shares, leaving southern concerns unaddressed.

Third, adopt a weighted formula: 80% weight for population, 20% for development indicators such as literacy, health, or sustained fertility control – analogous to how the Finance Commission uses composite indicators for tax devolution. This rewards governance outcomes, not just population size. The ratio could be 70:30.

Fourth, strengthens the Rajya Sabha as a genuinely federal chamber. Earlier, domicile requirements ensured that Members represented the States from which they were elected. Now, anyone can be elected from anywhere, weakening that link. The domicile condition must be restored. Additionally, Rajya Sabha seats remain distributed largely by population – Uttar Pradesh has 31 seats while Sikkim has one – blunting its federal purpose. Consider adopting the American system of equal seats a State, irrespective of size (California 39 million, Wyoming 0.5 million both have two Senators). An Indian model could be evolved which could have three tiers: largest States (15 seats each), medium States (10 seats), smallest States (five seats).

If done poorly, driven by political arithmetic alone, it can deepen distrust and injure India's federal spirit

Within each tier, States would have equal representation regardless of population, balancing federalism and restoring the Rajya Sabha's moderating role.

Fifth, bifurcate Uttar Pradesh into three or four States to neutralise its excessive weight. U.P. was already divided in 2000 to create Uttarakhand, and movements for Bundelkhand and Purvanchal Statehood have persisted for decades. If U.P.'s projected 151 seats were divided among four States (about 38 seats each), no single State would dominate – making this a federalism solution, not just an administrative one.

Sixth, implement phased redistribution across two election cycles. Reallocate half the adjusted seats in 2034, the remainder in 2039, giving States and parties time to adapt. This reduces political shock while honouring constitutional requirements.

The need for careful navigation

Delimitation will reshape coalition politics fundamentally. If two States command a quarter of Lok Sabha seats, the mathematics of government formation changes entirely. Regional parties that historically provided parliamentary balance would find their leverage reduced, regardless of absolute seat numbers. The choice between constitutional fairness and political stability requires navigating this structural tension carefully.

Beyond formulas, procedure matters. The Delimitation Commission should include experts in demography, constitutional law and federal studies, with meaningful State representation. Transparency, extensive public hearings and robust oversight are essential.

The next delimitation will also redraw internal constituency boundaries – considering geography, administrative convenience, and Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) representation. While the number of SC and ST reserved constituencies is determined by strict population proportion, the location of specific SC constituencies involves Commission discretion, potentially creating scope for manipulation.” The ST formula should apply to both.

Delimitation is a national milestone that will redistribute political voice and shape coalition politics for decades. Done well, it can reaffirm India's unity and modernise representation. Done poorly, it can deepen distrust and injure the federal spirit.

The Census will measure India's population; delimitation will measure its democracy. Once Census data is released, positions will harden and consensus will fade – making now the moment for dialogue.

If guided by transparency, empathy and shared justice, the exercise can renew faith in federalism and democracy. But if driven by political arithmetic alone, it may redraw the moral balance of the Republic itself.

UPSC Mains Practice Question: Delimitation after Census 2027 is not merely a technical exercise but a fundamental test of India's federal balance and democratic fairness. Critically examine this statement. Discuss the challenges posed by population-based seat reallocation and suggest measures to balance the principles of equal representation and cooperative federalism. (250 Words)

Context :

Delimitation, the constitutionally mandated process of redrawing electoral boundaries and reallocating parliamentary seats based on population, is set to become one of the most transformative political exercises in post-Independence India. As highlighted by former Chief Election Commissioner **S.Y. Quraishi**, the delimitation exercise due after Census 2027 will not merely adjust numbers; it will fundamentally reshape the balance of political power, federal relations, and the idea of representational fairness in India's democracy.

Constitutional and Historical Background

Articles **82** and **170** of the Constitution mandate delimitation after every Census.

However, the inter-State allocation of Lok Sabha seats has been **frozen since 1976**, based on the 1971 Census, to avoid penalising States that successfully implemented population control measures.

The **84th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2001** extended this freeze until the first Census after 2026, effectively expiring with Census 2027.

As a result, today's representation is based on a population of **548 million**, whereas India's current population exceeds **1.4 billion**.

Why Delimitation After 2027 Is Uniquely Consequential

1. Demographic Divergence

Since the 1970s, fertility rates across States have diverged sharply. Southern and western States achieved demographic transition through investments in education, health, and women's empowerment, while northern States such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar continue to grow faster. A purely population-based redistribution would significantly increase the political weight of high-population-growth States.

2. Federalism vs. Equality of Vote

If population alone becomes the criterion:

Uttar Pradesh and Bihar together could command **over one-fourth of Lok Sabha seats** in an expanded House.

Southern States may gain seats in absolute terms but lose **relative influence**, weakening their bargaining power in coalition politics.

This creates a moral and constitutional dilemma: **Should good governance and population control be punished with reduced political voice?**

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Extend the Freeze Further

Pros: Preserves current federal balance.

Cons: Violates the principle of “one person, one vote” and risks challenge under **Article 14** (equality before law).

Expand the Lok Sabha (e.g., 750–888 seats)

No State loses seats, but proportional gains still favour larger States.

Weighted Formula for Seat Allocation

Combine population (e.g., 70–80%) with development indicators such as literacy, health, and fertility control.

Similar to the Finance Commission’s composite approach to tax devolution.

Strengthen the Rajya Sabha as a Federal Chamber

Restore domicile requirements.

Revisit seat allocation to reduce population dominance, possibly adopting tier-based equal representation models inspired by the U.S. Senate.

Reorganisation of Large States

Bifurcation or trifurcation of Uttar Pradesh to prevent excessive concentration of political power, aligning administrative efficiency with federal balance.

Phased Delimitation

Implement redistribution over two election cycles (2034 and 2039) to minimise political disruption and allow adjustment.

Governance and Process Concerns

The Delimitation Commission’s composition must go beyond legal formalism and include **demographers, constitutional experts, and federal scholars**.

Transparency, public consultations, and State participation are essential to maintain legitimacy.

Internal redrawing of constituencies, including SC/ST reservations, must guard against arbitrariness and political manipulation.

Conclusion

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Delimitation after 2027 will test India's ability to balance **democratic equality with federal justice**. While population-based representation is a constitutional imperative, ignoring governance outcomes and regional sensitivities risks undermining the federal spirit. If approached with transparency, empathy, and innovation, delimitation can modernise India's democracy and reaffirm unity in diversity. If driven by narrow political arithmetic, it may recalibrate not just electoral maps, but the moral balance of the Republic itself.



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