

**The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE**  
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**Page 01 : GS III: Indian Economy / Prelims Exam**

India's entry into **Pax Silica** (signed in February 2026) marks a pivotal shift in its "strategic autonomy" toward "strategic alignment" in high-tech domains. The initiative, often compared to a "Technology NATO," brings together a coalition of "trusted partners" to build supply chains resilient against economic coercion, primarily aimed at reducing global dependence on China's dominance in electronics and rare earth elements (REEs).

## India joins U.S.-led tech alliance to build supply chains for electronics and critical minerals

**Aroon Deep**  
NEW DELHI

India joined the Pax Silica group on Friday, teaming up with the United States and other countries that have sought to build a common supply chain for electronics and critical minerals.

At an event during the AI Impact Summit, Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology Ashwini Vaishnaw signed a document formally including India in the group, along with U.S. Undersecretary of State for economic growth, energy, and the environment Jacob Helberg.

Mr. Helberg has been a major force in creating the group, which had its inaugural summit at the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C. last December.

In a brief impassioned



**New bond:** IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw (second from right) with U.S. envoy Sergio Gor (centre) and others at an event to mark India's entry into the Pax Silica initiative in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

address on Friday, Mr. Helberg asserted that "we have allowed the foundations of our economic security to drift", adding that it was important for countries like India and the U.S., who had both rejected "a king oceans away", to reclaim sovereignty over

their supply chains.

Pax Silica's other signatories include Canada, Japan, South Korea, and the European Union.

They have sought to make their supply chains more resilient to shocks from China, which has exercised its leverage over

the last year as the sole source of refined rare earth elements, to gain an upper hand in trade negotiations with the U.S.

"We have a very large talent pool, and we have conducted our foreign policy in a manner that builds trust," Mr. Vaishnaw said on the sidelines of the summit.

**'Say no to blackmail'**

"We find ourselves grappling with a global supply chain that is massively over concentrated," Mr. Helberg said.

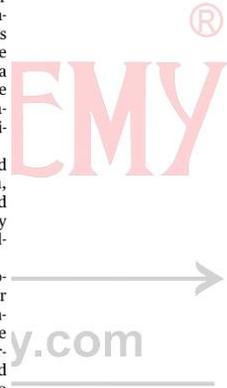
"We watch as our friends and allies face daily threats of economic coercion and blackmail, forced to choose between their sovereignty and their prosperity. We have seen the lights of a great Indian city extinguished by a keystroke from across the border," he added, in an appa-

rent reference to alleged sabotage that caused a blackout in Mumbai in October 2020.

"And we've seen our friends denied essential minerals simply because a leader dared to speak her mind," he said, in an apparent reference to China's recent restrictions on rare earth element exports as a response to Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's remarks on Taiwan.

"So today, as we signed the Pax Silica Declaration, we say no to weaponised dependency, and we say no to blackmail," Mr. Helberg said.

India was not a signatory at the initial summit for reasons that remain unconfirmed. However, the U.S., as the convening party of the group, had said for weeks that it is open to India joining.



### Understanding Pax Silica

The term is derived from '**Pax**' (Latin for peace) and '**Silica**' (the base for silicon chips), symbolizing a stable world order built on secure technology.

#### Key Objectives:

**Supply Chain Resilience:** Establishing alternative routes for critical minerals (Lithium, Cobalt, REEs) and semiconductors.

**Countering "Weaponized Dependency":** Reducing the leverage of nations that use their market dominance for political blackmail (e.g., China's recent export restrictions on gallium and germanium).

**Economic Security:** Treating the "silicon stack" (mining to AI deployment) as a pillar of national security.

#### Member Nations:

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# Daily News Analysis

Includes the **U.S., Japan, South Korea, Canada, the UK, the European Union, Australia, Singapore,** and now **India.**

## Strategic Significance for India

Dimension	Significance
<b>Technological Boost</b>	Access to advanced "know-how" and R&D for the <b>India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)</b> and <b>IndiaAI Mission.</b>
<b>Raw Material Security</b>	Collaboration in the extraction and processing of critical minerals, vital for India's EV and defense sectors.
<b>Geopolitical Balance</b>	Strengthens India's position in the Indo-Pacific alongside Quad partners, offering a democratic alternative to China's "Digital Silk Road."
<b>Talent Hub</b>	Leverages India's massive STEM talent pool; the alliance views India as the primary alternative manufacturing hub to China.

## Challenges and Concerns

**Strategic Autonomy:** Participation in a U.S.-led "bloc" might complicate India's traditional non-aligned foreign policy, especially with Russia and its "multi-aligned" stance.

**Developing vs. Developed Divide:** Most members are high-income countries. India must ensure that the "rules of the game" (patents, environmental norms in mining) do not disadvantage a developing economy.

**Nascent Ecosystem:** Compared to Japan or the US, India's semiconductor fabrication is still in its infancy; there is a risk of being primarily a "consumer" or "assembler" rather than a lead innovator.

## Conclusion

India's entry into Pax Silica is a recognition of its growing stature as a "Techno-Diplomatic" power. By joining this alliance, India is not merely seeking technology transfers but is positioning itself as an indispensable node in the global electronics value chain. For the UPSC aspirant, this represents a move from "Make in India" to "Integrate with the Global Supply Chain," reflecting a pragmatic approach to 21st-century national security where silicon is as vital as steel.

**UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question**

**Ques: Which of the following minerals have recently been at the centre of global supply chain tensions?**

1. Lithium
2. Gallium
3. Germanium
4. Rare Earth Elements

**Select the correct answer:**

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

**Ans : C**

**UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question**

**Ques:** India's participation in Pax Silica marks a shift from "strategic autonomy" to "strategic alignment" in high-technology domains. Critically examine. **(250 Words)**

**Page 02 : GS III : Environment / Prelims Exam**

While global climate discourse often focuses on international treaties and national targets (like India's Panchamrit goals), the real battle against global warming is being won at the micro-level. Bela Gram in Maharashtra and similar villages in Kerala, Jharkhand, and Karnataka demonstrate that Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are the most effective vehicles for achieving "Net Zero" through decentralized governance and traditional wisdom.

**Panchayat leadership helps Bela Gram emerge as first net-zero village**

**Snehal Mutha**  
 MUMBAI

Bela Gram in the Bhandara district of Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, India's first net-zero panchayat, was highlighted during the Mumbai Climate Week 2026 earlier this week, reflecting that panchayat leadership plays a vital role in shaping localised climate action and combating climate change.

"Climate change is first felt by common people in daily routines; in the food you grow, water you fetch. The impacts are visible when it affects health. So, for us, climate action begins at home, when the panchayat guides, people participate, and change starts," said Sharada Gaydhane, the sarpanch of Bela Gram, who led the initiatives to make her village a



Maharashtra Governor Acharya Devvrat at the three-day environmental conference 'Mumbai Climate Week', in Mumbai on Thursday. X/@MAHA\_GOVERNOR VIA ANI

net-zero panchayat, i.e. with zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Bela Gram panchayat planted more than 90,000 trees during weddings and festivals. It also advocated for a smooth energy transition from smoky chulhas to LPG, installed solar panels at homes, anganwadis, and panchayat offices. "We also

promoted waste segregation at doorsteps and achieved the vanishing of single-use plastics," said Ms. Gaydhane, who was twice-elected sarpanch and is a recipient of the Vasundhara Award for climate protection.

Bela Gram became Maharashtra's first net-zero village, receiving the 2024

Rashtriya Panchayat Puraskar. Ms. Gaydhane, in her blue saree and fixing her glasses, said, "Waste can be converted into wealth if thought properly."

**Stories of resilience**

K.K. Sachith from Kerala's Perinjanam reflected how his village became Solar Gramam. "With the funding from different sources, the panchayat got free solar panels, and today, after eight years, 850 households are rooftop prosumers, bills cut to 80%, emissions reduced at scale," said Mr. Sachith. Perinjanam won the 2019 Akshaya Oorja and MediaOne Maha panchayat awards for community-led renewables.

Mr. Sachith concluded, saying, "Development should not disturb the balance of nature. The government should make so-

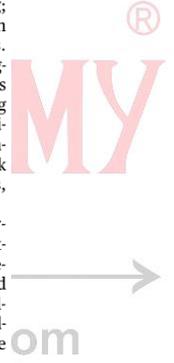
lar rooftops compulsory for new buildings. This will help India become people-centric."

Jharkhand's Ramvriksh Murmu, sarpanch of Siyari, belonging to the Birhor Tanda tribal group, conserved water, revived sources, and cut diesel pump reliance. "Climate change is a reality. Growing up, I felt forest water bodies had shrunk. Jharkhand, which gives coal to the entire country, did not have electricity for my hamlet. We came across 'District Mineral Fund (DMF)', which helped us revive the lake, introduce solar lift irrigation, and provide electricity. Also, installed 72 solar streetlights, school solar systems, and planting 2,880 mango saplings plus 800 fruit/shade trees, boosting forest livelihoods," said Mr. Murmu.

DMF is a non-profit trust under the MMDR Amendment Act 2015 that operates in mining-affected districts.

Pushpa Khairawar from Bihar's Garhi forests pointed out that climate stress meant thirst: ponds and streams dried yearly. "Erratic rains worsened erosion and risky farming; monsoons brought flash floods, damaging fields. Wildlife strayed into villages, injuring cattle and crops amid heat deaths ending coexistence," said Ms. Khairawar, adding the community built 45 mud check dams, 90 boulder dams, and three ponds.

Suryanarayan from Karnataka's Kolar implemented local solutions for the region's development and climate mitigation, including revival of lakes, ground-water, and a decline in the use of chemical fertilizer.



**Key Pillars of the Bela Gram Net-Zero Model**

Bela Gram's success is built on a multi-sectoral approach to eliminating greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions:

**Energy Transition:** Shifting from "smoky chulhas" (biomass) to LPG and widespread adoption of solar energy in homes, anganwadis, and public offices.

**Carbon Sequestration:** Aggressive afforestation (90,000+ trees) integrated into social fabric (weddings and festivals).

**Waste Management:** Achieving a "zero-waste" status through doorstep segregation and a total ban on single-use plastics.

**Circular Economy:** Converting waste into wealth through composting and recycling initiatives.

**Comparative Local Climate Models**

The Mumbai Climate Week 2026 showcased diverse strategies based on regional geography:

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## Daily News Analysis

Village/Region	Core Strategy	Funding/Mechanism
<b>Perinjanam (Kerala)</b>	Rooftop Solar "Prosumers"	Community-led funding; 80% reduction in bills.
<b>Siyari (Jharkhand)</b>	Solar Lift Irrigation	District Mineral Fund (DMF); focused on tribal forest livelihoods.
<b>Garhi (Bihar)</b>	Check Dams & Water Sheds	Traditional mud/boulder dams to prevent flash floods & erosion.
<b>Kolar (Karnataka)</b>	Regenerative Agriculture	Groundwater revival and reduction in chemical fertilizers.

### Significance for Governance

#### A. Role of the 73rd Amendment

The success of these villages underscores the importance of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, which empowered Panchayats. When a Sarpanch leads climate action, it ensures last-mile delivery and high community participation, which are often missing in bureaucratic schemes.

#### B. Convergence of Schemes

These models show how different funds can be effectively utilized:

DMF (District Mineral Fund): Used in mining-affected areas for green energy.

Rashtriya Panchayat Puraskar: Acts as a fiscal incentive for competitive federalism at the village level.

MGNREGA: Can be aligned with the construction of check dams and afforestation (as seen in Bihar and Maharashtra).

#### C. Addressing "Climate Vulnerability"

Localized action directly addresses rural vulnerabilities: water scarcity, erratic monsoons, and heat-related livestock deaths, thereby preventing "climate-induced migration."

#### Challenges to Scaling Up

Funding Gaps: Not all Panchayats have access to DMF or high levels of community funding.

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Technical Capacity: Many PRIs lack the technical expertise to

maintain solar grids or conduct carbon accounting.

Data Gaps: Measuring "Net Zero" at a village level requires rigorous data on emissions and sequestration, which is currently unstandardized.

### Conclusion

Bela Gram serves as a "Proof of Concept" that India's path to becoming Net Zero by 2070 lies in its 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats. By transforming villages from passive victims of climate change into proactive "prosumers" and conservationists, India can achieve a People-Centric Energy Transition. For sustainable development to succeed, the "Green Revolution 2.0" must be led not by labs, but by the Gram Sabhas.

### UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

**Ques: With reference to climate governance in India, consider the following statements:**

1. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment provides constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions.
2. Climate change mitigation and adaptation are explicitly listed in the Eleventh Schedule.
3. MGNREGA can be used for water conservation and afforestation activities.
4. The District Mineral Fund (DMF) is meant exclusively for industrial infrastructure development.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

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

**Ans: a)**

### UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

**Ques: Analyze the significance of circular economy models at the village level in achieving India's Net Zero target by 2070. (150 Words)**

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**Page 04 : GS III : Indian Economy / Prelims Exam**

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected that AI could add **0.8% to global GDP growth**, potentially pushing the world past pre-pandemic growth levels. For India, this technological leap is seen as a primary driver to reach developed-nation status. However, Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva warns of a "tsunami" hitting the labor market, necessitating a delicate balance between innovation and regulation.

# AI can help India achieve Viksit Bharat goal, but poses high risk to jobs: IMF chief

**Press Trust of India**  
 NEW DELHI

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva on Friday said artificial intelligence could lift global growth by 0.8% and help India achieve the Viksit Bharat goal, but poses significant risk of displacement of jobs and financial stability.

While being optimistic about the technology, Ms. Georgieva cautioned against "sugarcoating" the impact of AI and called for striking a balance between building and managing AI as a "force for good, or a force for evil".

"AI can lift up global growth by almost a percentage point. We say 0.8%. It would mean that the world would grow faster than it did before the COVID pandemic. And that is fantastic for creating more opportunities, more jobs. This is the magnitude that we see for India, and it would mean that India's Viksit Bharat is achievable," Ms. Georgieva said at the AI Im-



Kristalina Georgieva

pact Summit in New Delhi. She said AI creates potential for countries that go fast on digital infrastructure, skills, and adoption of AI, and countries must embrace the opportunities, while being mindful of the risks.

### Three major risks

"I am very optimistic about AI. I'm also not naive, it brings significant risks," she said while listing out three major risks from AI.

First, it brings the risk of making countries and the world less fair as some countries will have the technology and others would not, and the other is the risk of financial stability,

wherein AI could get loose and create havoc on financial markets.

Also, it brings the risk of displacement of jobs with no good thinking about how to help people find their place in the new AI economy.

"We calculated this risk as very high. We actually see the impact of AI on the labour market like a tsunami hitting it. Globally, 40% of jobs will be affected by AI, some enhanced, others eliminated. In emerging markets 40%, but in advanced economies, 60%. And that is happening over a relatively short period of time," Ms. Georgieva said.

She said the IMF will continue to work with countries to understand what is happening in AI and then how to project it for policies for the future.

An IMF research on how AI is affecting the labour market showed that in United States, one in 10 jobs already requires additional skills and for those who have the skills, the job pays better.

# Daily News Analysis

## The Potential: AI as an Engine for Viksit Bharat

AI is not just a tool for the tech sector; it is a horizontal enabler across the Indian economy:

**Economic Lift:** A 0.8% boost in growth can significantly shorten the timeline for India to become a \$30 trillion economy.

**Productivity Gains:** AI-driven efficiencies in agriculture (precision farming), healthcare (early diagnosis), and education (personalized learning) can bridge rural-urban divides.

**Infrastructure Lead:** India's robust **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)**—like UPI and Aadhaar—provides the "data highway" needed for rapid AI adoption.

### The Triple Risk Factor

The IMF highlights three critical risks that India and the global community must navigate:

Risk Category	Impact Description
<b>Labor Displacement</b>	<b>40% of jobs globally</b> (and in emerging markets) will be affected. While some jobs are enhanced, many entry-level white-collar and service roles may be eliminated.
<b>Global Inequality</b>	A "digital divide" where countries with the capital to invest in AI pull further ahead, leaving technologically lagging nations behind.
<b>Financial Stability</b>	High-frequency AI trading and autonomous financial algorithms could lead to market "flash crashes" or systemic instability if left unmonitored.

### Analysis: The "Tsunami" on the Labor Market

The IMF's comparison of AI to a **tsunami** reflects the speed of change.

**Advanced vs. Emerging:** While advanced economies face a higher risk (60% of jobs), India's risk (40%) is significant due to its massive young population entering the workforce annually.

**Skill Premium:** In the US, 1 in 10 jobs already requires "AI-added" skills, leading to higher pay for those who adapt. For India, this creates an urgent mandate for **massive re-skilling**.

**The "Middle-Income Trap":** If India cannot transition its workforce to high-skill AI-complementary roles, it risks stagnating wages even as GDP grows.

### Strategic Way Forward for India

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To harness AI for Viksit Bharat while mitigating risks, India should focus

on:

**AI for All (Inclusion):** Ensuring AI tools are available in regional languages to prevent a new "language-based" digital divide.

**Regulatory Guardrails:** Implementing the **Digital India Act** to manage AI ethics and financial market safeguards.

**Human-Centric Transition:** Using tax incentives for companies that invest in employee re-skilling rather than outright replacement.

### Conclusion

The IMF's outlook suggests that for India, AI is no longer an "option" but a **necessity** for growth. However, the path to Viksit Bharat requires moving beyond "sugarcoating" the challenges. The success of this transition will depend on whether India can turn the "tsunami" of displacement into a wave of **human-AI collaboration**, ensuring that the dividends of technology are shared equitably across its 1.4 billion citizens.

### UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

**Ques: The term "Middle-Income Trap" refers to:**

- A) A situation where a country faces high inflation after attaining middle-income status
- B) Stagnation of growth due to inability to transition from low-cost manufacturing to innovation-driven growth
- C) A fiscal deficit crisis in developing nations
- D) Excessive reliance on remittances

**Ans: B)**

### UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

**Ques: Artificial Intelligence is both an engine of growth and a disruptor of labor markets. Examine this statement in the context of India's aspiration for Viksit Bharat. (150 Words)**

**Page 06 : GS II : Indian Polity / Prelims Exam**

The Justice Kurian Joseph Committee (comprising Justice Joseph, M. Ashok Vardhan Shetty, and Prof. M. Naganathan) was tasked with examining the erosion of state autonomy. The report argues that the "unitary tilt" designed in 1947 to handle post-Partition anxieties has outlived its utility and is now a hindrance to democracy, innovation, and social justice.

**The "Defanging" of the Governor**

One of the most contentious areas in Centre-State relations is the role of the Governor. The report proposes radical changes to ensure the office remains a "bridge" rather than an "instrument of overreach."

**Key Recommendations:**

**Appointment:** Amend **Article 155** to require the President to appoint a Governor from a panel of three names approved by the **State Legislative Assembly**.

**Tenure:** A fixed, non-renewable **5-year term**. Removal should only be possible through a resolution passed by the State Legislature.

**Time-bound Assent:** Mandatory 15-day timeline for Governors to act on State Bills. If no action is taken, it should be considered **"deemed assent."**

**Abolition of Customary Roles:** End the Governor's role as the Chancellor of State Universities and abolish the customary address at the start of Assembly sessions.

**Reversing "One Nation, One Language"**

The report strongly critiques the push for linguistic homogenization, calling it antithetical to India's pluralistic fabric.

**Official Languages:** Amend **Article 343** to permanently entrench **English** as an official language alongside Hindi.

**Eighth Schedule:** Declare all languages in the Eighth Schedule as "official languages" of the Union.

**Bilingualism:** Move from "weak trilingualism" to "high-proficiency bilingualism" (Regional Language + English).

**Safeguarding Territorial and Electoral Integrity**

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**Treatise for federalism**

The Kurian Joseph report must provoke a debate on reversing centralisation

A high-level committee on Union-State relations appointed by the Government of Tamil Nadu has mapped the pattern of centralisation of power and the weakening of federal democracy in India over the decades, and suggested comprehensive corrective measures. The three-member Committee, chaired by a former Supreme Court judge, Justice Kurian Joseph, has drawn on scholarship across various disciplines, Constituent Assembly debates, and the findings of three other committees on Centre-State relations, while also critiquing recent governance trends that weaken the authority of States. It concludes that centralisation is increasing – which it notes is not healthy – and calls for urgent remedial measures. The report is an expansive critique of the dilapidation of federalism, threatening India's progress, and calls for changes to reverse the dangerous course, stating that "Indian federalism now requires a structural reset comparable in ambition to the economic reforms of 1991". India's constitutional framework took shape against the backdrop of Partition, and the consolidation of princely States. The context encouraged the founders to tilt towards a centralising constitutional scheme; legislative, administrative, and judicial measures in the ensuing decades further reinforced this line of thinking. The report convincingly takes down the arguments for centralisation, and argues that federalised governance is essential for a country of India's size and diversity, and that it would in fact be dangerous to overlook this imperative.

The Kurian Joseph Committee report comes amid repeated and deliberate moves by the Union to centralise power. The Constitution can be amended far too easily for a federal polity, and this creates a self-perpetuating cycle of centralisation. The territorial integrity of States is at the mercy of the Centre, most blatantly illustrated by the dismantling of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories in 2019. The misplaced idea that the country needs one national language is being pursued by the Union government, which is particularly assertive on the question. Governors have become instruments of the Centre's overreach in all areas of governance. The impending inter-State delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies is causing anxiety among States that have stabilised their populations and stand to lose their relative weight in national governance. The Union has overt power in the conduct of elections, and key sectors such as education and health are being increasingly centralised. The GST regime has restructured India's fiscal landscape in favour of the Union and at States' expense. This report lays out the logic, facts and common sense about why federated governance should be the path to progress. This report must form the basis for a new national conversation.

## Daily News Analysis

The committee highlights how the current framework allows the Union to alter the very existence of a state without its consent (as seen in the 2019 reorganization of J&K).

Issue	Recommendation
<b>State Boundaries</b>	Amend <b>Article 3</b> to require mandatory consent of the affected State Legislature or a referendum before altering boundaries or names.
<b>Delimitation</b>	Freeze the inter-state allocation of Lok Sabha seats until <b>2126</b> or until fertility rates converge across all states to prevent penalizing states with successful population control.
<b>Elections</b>	Scrap the " <b>One Nation, One Election</b> " proposal; limit the ECI's role to Union elections while empowering State Election Commissions for state polls.

### Fiscal and Sectoral Autonomy

The report notes that the **GST regime** has significantly weakened the fiscal headroom of states.

**GST Council:** Proposes structural tweaks to give states more veto power and suggests that GST Council recommendations be treated as "advisory" rather than mandatory.

**Education & Health:** Calls for moving **Education** (including medical education like NEET/NEET) back to the **State List** to allow for regional specificities.

**Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS):** Recommends that the Union fund 80% of CSS or provide "untied grants" to give states flexibility in implementation.

### Conclusion

The Kurian Joseph report concludes that a "strong Union can only exist if there are strong States." It rejects the notion that decentralization weakens national unity; instead, it argues that a "right-sized" Union—focusing on national challenges like defense and foreign policy while leaving regional governance to states—is the only way to achieve the Viksit Bharat goal. For a UPSC aspirant, this report provides a modern critique of the "Basic Structure" of federalism and offers a roadmap for Cooperative Federalism 2.0.

**UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question**

**Ques:** With reference to Indian federalism, consider the following statements:

1. The Indian Constitution describes India as a "Union of States."
2. The Parliament can alter the boundaries of a State by a simple majority.
3. The Inter-State Council is a constitutional body under Article 263.
4. The Governor is elected directly by the people of the State.

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

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

**Ans: A)**

**UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question**

**Ques:** "Indian federalism now requires a structural reset comparable to the economic reforms of 1991." Critically examine in the context of recent trends in Centre–State relations. **(250 words)**



### Page 10 : GS II : Governance

Enacted in February 1976 (retrospective from Oct 1975), the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act was designed to strike at the roots of "debt bondage"—a system where a debtor pledges their labor (or that of their family) to a creditor. Five decades later, while the "chains" of colonialism are gone, the "chains of debt" and "caste-based servitude" persist, often masked as distress migration.



Children stand about posing towards their place of work in Bulandshahr district.

## A temporary relief from bonded labour

A landmark law formulated to end bonded labour in India marks its 50th year of passing. Sanyasir Kumar Kamra examines the Act's relevance and effectiveness through the voices of labourers in Odisha who slipped back into bondage even after being officially rescued

**D**etermined to halt the extension of his two sons and daughter, Chandra (son Mohan), 44, of Balinga, a western Odisha district that depends on rain for agriculture, took home in early 2012 for Balinga. He had been promised work on a poultry farm and a place to sleep with the chicks he would be rearing. Though the wages were meagre, just ₹100 a month, he felt he would at least get a steady income he could rely on. The speech, the harassment, the loneliness proved unbearable in about a month, he said, and began the journey home.

As a migrant labourer, Chandra, desperate to get an official document to prove his return to his work, asked a friend, Vikas, who had been working in a brick kiln, to get him a document. Vikas had a job that had him to the place he worked. He said, some labourers had made constant work and that he would return. He said, "I would like to know the details of the labourers' return." They walked for hours, but they did not get the money they had promised. They had promised to get ₹100 a month for a month. He would like to know the details of the labourers' return. They walked for hours, but they did not get the money they had promised. They had promised to get ₹100 a month for a month. He would like to know the details of the labourers' return.

He returned to his village. He carried the hope that the law would help him. He had his life, he had his family, he had his work. He had his life, he had his family, he had his work. He had his life, he had his family, he had his work.

The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, came into force in India in February 1976, after 10 years of enactment in February 2006. It was a landmark in India's history, marking the end of bonded labour in the country. It was a landmark in India's history, marking the end of bonded labour in the country. It was a landmark in India's history, marking the end of bonded labour in the country.

The decade after its enactment, the Act "saved" labourers from a cycle of debt, slavery, and bonded labour. It was a landmark in India's history, marking the end of bonded labour in the country. It was a landmark in India's history, marking the end of bonded labour in the country.

Individuals and families migrate to work in Bulandshahr district, but many have returned to bonded labour in Odisha. It was a landmark in India's history, marking the end of bonded labour in the country. It was a landmark in India's history, marking the end of bonded labour in the country.

what he now calls the worst ordeal of his life. He and his family were beaten, burnt, and starved. Clearing droppings from pens to drink became a routine.

"The three months we spent inside the poultry farm felt like the work and more like a punishment. It was worse than the hell described in mythology," he says. "The owner had promised us ₹10,000 a month, but wages rarely came. He would not allow us to know, fight or call. In desperation, the couple secretly sent their children away with a relative. The children, still stammering over labour, returned to Bulandshahr, where they found a new owner. "That day, we got our freedom," he says.

But even so, the new owner's demands remained. He had to work, but he had to work in a brick kiln. He had to work, but he had to work in a brick kiln. He had to work, but he had to work in a brick kiln.

They were rescued from paying wages from Bulandshahr, who, along with his wife, was rescued from a brick kiln in Tamil Nadu in 2012. They returned to Odisha, where they were rescued from a brick kiln in Tamil Nadu in 2012. They returned to Odisha, where they were rescued from a brick kiln in Tamil Nadu in 2012.

By 2012, the couple had no choice but to return to their village. They had no money, no work, and no hope. They had no money, no work, and no hope. They had no money, no work, and no hope.

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"When rehabilitation is delayed, rescued labourers are not only left in the same condition, but suffer from health or exploitation. The conditions are 'as if' the bonded labourers had never been rescued," says Uday Bhandari, Director of Migration and Education, AIEE, an international non-profit working on the intersection of poverty and education.

India's bonded labour is only the first step. "We may have freed people physically from their chains, but not from the debt that binds them. Helping them stand on their own feet is a long-term process," Bhandari adds. Without sustained support, rescue becomes a temporary respite, not a permanent escape.

The law mandates close monitoring of rescued bonded labourers, with their health records in official registers. It also requires the District Collector to designate committees, chaired by the Collector, to monitor their progress. The Odisha model offers a responsible rehabilitation and rescue framework. The Odisha model offers a responsible rehabilitation and rescue framework.

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ence is meant to be a foundation for rehabilitating free labourers. But thousands of rescued bonded labourers continue to wait for rehabilitation.

New understandings of the law better than the original law have taken up the cause of bonded bonded labourers before the Odisha High Court. The petition covers 1,200 bonded labourers from Bulandshahr district, 28 from Bargarh district, 10 from Nayagarh district, and 10 from Kalahandi district.

"Labour collectives, humanists, coordinated for the rescue of hundreds of workers from different districts. Most were migrant labourers from western Odisha who had endured bonded conditions," Parash says. "They underwent statutory visits before Sub-Divisional Magistrates in the districts where they were rescued and were issued release certificates. But rehabilitation never followed. The petition, addressing the gaps, raised the same legislative work they had done."

The petition, who expect to go ahead, has been a slow rally of workers, attorneys and lawyers. The petition, who expect to go ahead, has been a slow rally of workers, attorneys and lawyers. The petition, who expect to go ahead, has been a slow rally of workers, attorneys and lawyers.

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**The Cycle of "Rescue without Rehabilitation"**

The report highlights a "revolving door" phenomenon where rescued laborers return to bondage within months.

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# Daily News Analysis

**The Gap:** Identification and release (judicial act) happen relatively quickly, but **rehabilitation (social/economic act)** is delayed or non-existent.

**Consequence:** Without immediate cash relief or land/job linkages, the laborer—still burdened by the original debt and hunger—has no choice but to migrate back into exploitative conditions (e.g., brick kilns, poultry farms).

**Administrative Failure:** 50% of Odisha's districts lack the mandatory ₹10 lakh corpus fund for immediate relief.

## The Evolving Nature of Bondage

Bondage in 2026 is not always static; it is mobile and multifaceted:

Type	Characteristics	Key Challenges
<b>Inter-State Migration</b>	Laborers from Odisha moving to AP, Telangana, or Karnataka.	Lack of coordination between home and host states; jurisdictional hurdles in filing cases.
<b>Caste-Based (Hereditary)</b>	Barber/Washermen communities forced into "customary services" (e.g., death rituals).	High social resistance; "social boycott" of those who refuse; bureaucratic denial of caste-based bondage.
<b>Modern Slavery</b>	15-hour workdays in brick kilns or fisheries under constant surveillance.	Difficult to identify as "bondage" vs. "poor working conditions" without rigorous inspection.

## Legal & Policy Framework

The legal landscape has shifted significantly in recent years, yet implementation lags on the ground.

**Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976:** Directs the District Magistrate (DM) to constitute **Vigilance Committees** and conduct periodic surveys.

**Central Sector Scheme (2016/2022): \* Financial Aid:** Graded assistance from ₹30,000 (immediate) up to ₹3 lakh (for extreme cases/vulnerable groups).

**Funding:** 100% funded by the Centre, removing the excuse of "state budget constraints."

**The Data Vacuum:** The last comprehensive data comes from the **SECC-2011**. There is no real-time dashboard for tracking rescued vs. rehabilitated laborers.

## Systemic Roadblocks

**Lack of Ownership:** Overlapping jurisdictions between Labour, Revenue, and Panchayati Raj departments lead to "diffused responsibility."

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**Bureaucratic Apathy:** The revocation of release certificates (as seen in Puri) suggests an unwillingness to recognize existing bondage to avoid "bad statistics."

**Lack of Convergence:** Rehabilitation is often treated as a "one-time payment" rather than a holistic package involving housing (**PMAY**), land allotment, and skilling (**PMKVY**).

### Conclusion

The 50-year journey of the Act reveals that freedom is not an event, but a process. For a "Viksit Bharat," the elimination of bonded labor is a moral and economic imperative. The solution lies in moving from "Summary Trials" to "Sustainable Livelihoods." As activist Umi Daniel suggests, rescue must be linked to anti-poverty programs to ensure that the "release certificate" is not just a piece of paper, but a passport to a life of dignity.

### UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

**Ques:** Despite five decades of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, bonded labour persists in new and disguised forms. Examine the reasons and suggest reforms. (150 Words)

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***'Bhasha' matters in India's multilingual moment***

India stands at an extraordinary crossroads, with a linguistic landscape unmatched in scale and richness. According to the 2011 Census, India is home to more than 1,300 mother tongues and 121 constitutionally recognised languages. This diversity is not merely a statistic. It is a national strength, central to how children learn, grow and understand the world.

When a language disappears, we lose more than words. We lose a way of understanding the world built over generations. Safeguarding languages is, therefore, not only a cultural imperative. It is fundamentally a question of holding on to humanity's accumulated knowledge, which in turn makes it an educational issue. This is why mother-tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) is critical.

**Basis for quality education**

As we mark International Mother Language Day (February 21), under the theme "Youth voices on multilingual education", the message is clear: young people thrive when their languages – and, therefore, their identities – are recognised and valued in the classroom. When this happens, schools become spaces where children learn about themselves, others, and the world in all its diversity. UNESCO has long championed multilingual teaching, based on the language best understood and spoken, as a condition for quality education.

Each year, UNESCO publishes the State of the Education Report for India, focusing on a specific theme. This year, which is the seventh edition (2025), *Bhasha Matters: Mother Tongue and Multilingual Education*, brought together global research, new national evidence and practical lessons to explore the state of Mother Tongue and Multilingual Education in India. The report demonstrates that MTB-MLE is not only pedagogically sound but also transformative. It outlines 10 policy recommendations to guide India towards a more inclusive and equitable education system that treats linguistic diversity as



**Tim Curtis**

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Mother-tongue-based multilingual education is central to inclusive and effective education

an asset rather than a challenge. It also highlights what is working – from bilingual learning materials and teacher preparation to innovative digital solutions that bring multilingual resources to classrooms and communities

**A barrier of language**

Globally, over a quarter of a billion learners lack access to education in a language they fully understand. In India, nearly 44% of children enter school speaking a language that is different from the medium of instruction, according to the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in 2022. For these children, learning begins with the added burden of decoding an unfamiliar language before grasping academic concepts. Weak foundational literacy and numeracy can lead to cumulative learning gaps, reduced confidence and, ultimately, a higher risk of dropout.

India has taken decisive steps to address this challenge. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, followed by the National Curriculum Frameworks of 2022 and 2023, places the child's home or mother tongue at the centre of early education.

The *Bhasha Matters* report highlights promising examples. In Odisha, a long-standing multilingual education programme spans 21 tribal languages across 17 districts, supporting nearly 90,000 children. In Telangana, the use of Digital Infrastructure for Knowledge Sharing (DIKSHA)-enabled multilingual resources demonstrates how digital tools can expand access to learning materials in local languages. National initiatives such as PM eVIDYA, *Adi Vaani* (developed by a national consortium), *BHASHINI* (BHash-based AND Intelligent Node for Inclusion in India) and *A14Bharat's* community-developed language technologies show how digital platforms and artificial intelligence can help document endangered languages, create local-language content and support teachers with multilingual resources.

Building on these examples, *Bhasha Matters* sets out a practical road map. It calls for clear state-level language-in-education policies grounded in MTB-MLE, stronger teacher recruitment and professional standards for multilingual classrooms, and reforms in pre-service and in-service training to embed multilingual pedagogy. It emphasises high-quality multilingual materials and assessments, community participation and indigenous knowledge, gender-responsive approaches, responsible investment in language technologies, and sustainable financing. Crucially, it proposes a National Mission for Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education to coordinate action across ministries, research institutions, civil society and technology partners, ensuring that promising pilots become systemic reform.

**Linguistic diversity is a driver**

India's linguistic diversity is not a barrier to development; it is a powerful driver of equity, identity and social cohesion. With States already demonstrating what is possible, and with clear policy frameworks in place, the country stands at the threshold of transformative educational change. This shift reflects a growing body of evidence: children learn best when taught in a language they understand.

On International Mother Language Day, the call is clear. Education systems must recognise and value every learner's language, not only to improve learning outcomes but also to affirm identity, well-being and meaningful participation in society.

When young people's voices are heard, multilingual education becomes more than a policy aspiration. It becomes a shared national movement. India's multilingual moment has arrived – and its youth are helping to shape its future.

Link to report: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000397158>

**GS Paper II : Governance**

**UPSC Mains Practice Question:** "Linguistic diversity is not a barrier to development but a driver of equity and inclusion." Discuss in the context of India's Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education initiatives. **(250 Words)**

## Context :

India's linguistic landscape—featuring 121 recognized languages and over 1,300 mother tongues—is often viewed as an administrative challenge. However, UNESCO argues it is a **"national strength."** The "Bhasha Matters" report emphasizes that excluding a child's home language from the classroom creates a "language barrier" that leads to learning poverty, high dropout rates, and the erosion of indigenous knowledge.

### The Problem: The "Language Gap" in Classrooms

A significant portion of Indian students face a "double burden" when they start school:

**The Statistic:** Nearly **44% of Indian children** enter school speaking a language different from the medium of instruction (NCERT, 2022).

**Cognitive Load:** Children are forced to decode an unfamiliar language (often English or a state's dominant language) before they can grasp basic concepts like addition or storytelling.

**Impact:** This leads to weak **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)**, reduced confidence, and cumulative learning gaps.

### Policy Framework: NEP 2020 and Beyond

The Indian government has aligned its policy framework with global best practices to bridge this gap:

**NEP 2020:** Mandates that, where possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5 (preferably Grade 8) should be the mother tongue/local language.

**National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2022/23:** Places the child's home language at the center of the "Foundational Stage" of learning.

**UNESCO Recommendations:** The report suggests a **National Mission for MTB-MLE** to coordinate efforts between the Ministry of Education and technology partners.

### Best Practices and Technology Enablers

The report highlights successful "bottom-up" models and "top-down" technological interventions:

Initiative	Region/Scope	Outcome
<b>Odisha Tribal Programme</b>	17 Districts	Uses 21 tribal languages to support 90,000 children in early schooling.
<b>DIKSHA &amp; PM eVIDYA</b>	National	Provides digital textbooks and resources in multiple regional languages.
<b>BHASHINI</b>	National (AI)	An AI-led mission to break language barriers through real-time translation and content creation.
<b>AI4Bharat</b>	R&D	Community-developed technologies to document endangered languages.

### Roadmap for Implementation

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UNESCO outlines 10 policy recommendations for India to achieve true

linguistic equity:

**State-Level Policies:** Tailoring language-in-education rules to specific regional diversities.

**Teacher Training:** Reforming B.Ed. and M.Ed. programs to include multilingual pedagogy.

**Indigenous Knowledge:** Integrating local folklore, history, and ecological wisdom into the curriculum.

**Responsible AI:** Using language technologies to empower teachers rather than replace them.

**Sustainable Financing:** Ensuring long-term funding for the creation of high-quality bilingual materials.

### Conclusion

Linguistic diversity is not an obstacle to be overcome, but a driver of social cohesion and equity. As India moves toward its Viksit Bharat goals, ensuring that "Bhasha" (language) is a bridge rather than a barrier will determine the success of its demographic dividend. By embracing MTB-MLE, India is not just improving test scores; it is preserving the accumulated knowledge of humanity and affirming the identity of millions of young learners.