LAKSHYA ACADEMY
Aim, Think & Achieve
www.lakshyaacademy.co I www.lakshyaiasacademy.com

THE HINDU
INDIA'S NATIONAL NEWSPAPER SINCE 1878

Daily News Analysis

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

Thursday,23 April, 2026

Edition : InternationalTable of Contents

Add- 21/B, Om Swati Manor Chs, J.K. Sawant Marg, Opp. Shivaji Natyamandir, Behind Cambridge Showroom, Dadar (West) Mumbai – 400028
Con.- 09820971345, 9619071345, 9223209699
G-mail-lakshyaacademymumbai@gmail.com

A recent report by the International Labour Organization (ILO), titled "The Psychosocial Working Environment: Global Developments and Pathways for Action," has revealed a staggering global health crisis. It estimates that 8.4 lakh (840,000) people die annually due to psychosocial risks at work. This report marks a paradigm shift in Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), moving the focus from physical hazards (like machinery or chemicals) to the invisible, structural "toxicity" of modern work environments.

'Toxic workplaces take lives of 8.4 lakh people annually'

A.M. Jigeesh
NEW DELHI

More than 8,40,000 people die each year around the globe from health conditions linked to psychosocial risks, including long working hours, job insecurity, and workplace harassment, according to a new global report by the International Labour Organization (ILO) released in Geneva on Wednesday.

These work-related psychosocial risks are mainly associated with cardiovascular diseases and mental disorders, including suicide, according to the report titled "The psychosocial working environment: global developments and pathways for action".

The report prescribes policy interventions at both levels of government and industry to address the situation, along with empowering collectivisation of the workforce.

The report calls for policy interventions at both central and State levels of government

The report said work-related psychosocial risks represent a major and growing threat to workers' safety and health, organisational productivity, and broader economic performance. Psychosocial risk factors are responsible for more than 8,40,000 deaths annually due to associated cardiovascular diseases and mental disorders, the report added. "These risks also lead to nearly 45 million disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) lost each year. The combined impact of cardiovascular disease and mental disorders associated with psychosocial risk factors is estimated to result in 1.37% of global GDP lost annually," the report said.

"The ILO estimates that globally, 35% of workers work more than 48 hours per week. Exposure to bullying and other forms of violence and harassment is another major concern. The ILO estimates that 23% of workers globally have experienced at least one form of violence or harassment in their working life, with psychological violence being the most prevalent at 18%," the report said.

The ILO estimated the figure of over 840,000 deaths per year by using two key sources of evidence, including the global prevalence of five major psychosocial risk factors at work – job strain, effort-reward imbalance, job insecurity, long working hours, and workplace bullying and harassment.

Key Findings of the ILO Report

The Death Toll: Psychosocial risks—including long working hours, job insecurity, and workplace harassment—are responsible for over 8.4 lakh deaths per year.

Health Impact: These risks are primarily linked to **cardiovascular diseases** (stroke, ischemic heart disease) and **mental disorders**, including depression and suicide.

Economic Cost: The global economy loses approximately **1.37% of its GDP** annually due to these factors. This stems from high absenteeism, turnover, and nearly **45 million Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs)** lost.

Prevalence of Risk Factors:

Long Hours: 35% of the global workforce works more than 48 hours per week.

Harassment: 23% of workers have experienced violence or harassment, with **18% reporting psychological violence**.

The Five Pillars of Psychosocial Risk

The report identifies five specific structural factors that contribute to a "toxic" environment:

Job Strain: High work demands combined with low control over how tasks are performed.

Effort-Reward Imbalance: Working hard without fair pay, recognition, or career prospects.

Job Insecurity: Constant fear of layoffs or precarious contractual arrangements.

Long Working Hours: Specifically, working ≥ 55 hours per week is a critical driver of heart disease.

Workplace Bullying & Harassment: Physical or psychological abuse that undermines human dignity.

LAKSHYA ACADEMY Aim, Think & Achieve www.lakshyaacademy.co I www.lakshyaiasacademy.com

Relevance to India

The 70-Hour Debate: The report serves as a scientific rebuttal to recent debates in India suggesting young professionals should work 70 hours a week to boost national productivity. ILO data shows that such hours are counterproductive and lethal.

Informal Sector Challenges: India has a massive informal workforce where "job insecurity" and "lack of social dialogue" are systemic, exacerbating these psychosocial risks.

POSH Act and Mental Health: While India has the **POSH Act (2013)** for sexual harassment, the report highlights the need for broader frameworks to address "psychological violence" and general workplace bullying.

Article 42 of the Constitution: This report aligns with the Directive Principle of State Policy (DPSP) which mandates "just and humane conditions of work."

Recommendations for Action

Shift from Individual to Structural: Interventions should move away from just "counseling" (fixing the worker) to **workplace redesign** (fixing the job).

Policy Integration: Governments must integrate psychosocial risk management into national **Occupational Safety and Health (OSH)** codes.

Collectivization: Empowering trade unions and collective bargaining to give workers a voice in work organization.

Adopting ILO Convention 190: Nations are urged to ratify the **Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190)** to provide a legal shield against workplace abuse.

Conclusion

The ILO report underscores that "toxic culture" is not just a corporate buzzword but a global public health emergency. For a country like India, aiming for a $5 trillion economy, the "health of the workforce" is as critical as "capital investment." True productivity cannot be built on the foundation of chronic stress and cardiovascular risk. Moving forward, the focus must shift toward Decent Work (SDG 8), ensuring that the workplace is a site of dignity and health rather than a source of mortality.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques:The term "Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs)" refers to:

(a) Total number of deaths in a population

(b) Years lost due to illness, disability, or premature death

(c) Average life expectancy of a population

(d) Number of working days lost due to illness

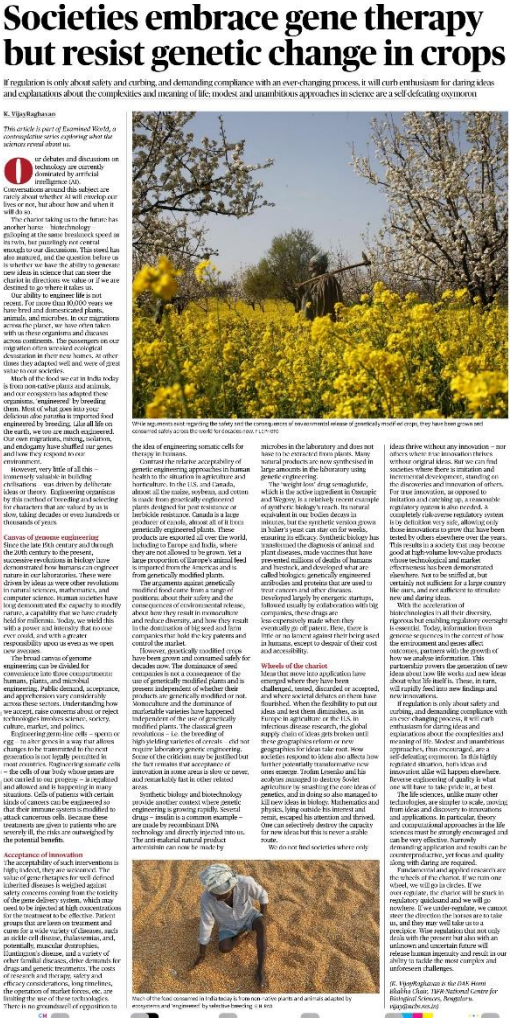
Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Psychosocial risks at the workplace are emerging as a major public health concern.Discuss their causes and suggest policy measures to address them.**150 Words)**

Page 07: GS III : Science and Tech / Prelims Exam

The 21st century is defined by the twin "horses" of progress: Artificial Intelligence and Biotechnology. While AI dominates public discourse, biotechnology has matured to a level where humans can precisely engineer life. However, a significant dichotomy has emerged: society enthusiastically welcomes genetic engineering in human healthcare (somatic cell therapy) but remains deeply skeptical of it in agriculture (GM crops). This divide, driven by a mix of safety concerns, cultural perceptions, and political-economic factors, poses a challenge for nations like India as they navigate the fine line between scientific daring and regulatory caution.



Societies embrace gene therapy but resist genetic change in crops

If regulation is only about safety and curbing, and demanding compliance with an ever-changing process, it will curb enthusiasm for daring ideas and explanations about the complexities and meaning of life; modest and unambitious approaches in science are a self-defeating oxymoron

K. Vijay Raghavan

This article is part of Examined World, a contemplative series exploring what the science reveal about us.

Our debates and discussions on technology are currently dominated by artificial intelligence (AI).

Conversations around this subject are rarely about whether AI will envelop our lives or not, but about how and when it will do so.

The chariot taking us to the future has another horse – biotechnology – galloping at the same breakneck speed as its twin, but jarringly out of sight enough to our discussions. This steed has also matured, and the question before us is whether we have the ability to generate new ideas in science that can steer the chariot in directions we value or if we are destined to go where it takes us.

Our ability to engineer life is not recent. For more than 10,000 years we have bred and domesticated plants, animals, and microbes. In our migrations across the planet, we have often taken with us these organisms and diseases across continents. The passengers on our migration often wreaked ecological devastation in their new homes. At other times they adapted well and were of great value to our societies.

Much of the food we eat in India today is from non-native plants and animals, and our ecosystem has adopted these organisms, 'engineered' by breeding them. Most of what goes into your delicious aloo paratha is imported food engineered by breeding. Like all life on the earth, we too are much engineered. Our own migrations, mixing, isolation, and endogamy have shuffled our genes and how they respond to our environment.

However, very little of all this — immensely valuable in building civilisations — was driven by deliberate ideas or theory. Engineering organisms by this method of breeding and selecting for characters that are valued by us is slow, taking decades or even hundreds or thousands of years.

Canvas of genome engineering

Since the late 19th century and through the 20th century to the present, successive revolutions in biology have demonstrated how humans can engineer nature in our laboratories. These were driven by ideas as were other revolutions in human science, mathematics, and computer science. Human societies have long demonstrated the capacity to modify nature, a capability that we have crudely held for millennia. Today, we wield this with a power and intensity that no one ever could, and with a greater responsibility upon us even as we open new avenues.

The broad canvas of genome engineering can be divided for convenience into three compartments: humans, plants, and microbial engineering. While demand, acceptance, and apprehension vary considerably across these sectors, understanding how we accept, raise concerns about, or reject technologies involves science, society, culture, market, and politics.

Engineering germ-line cells – sperm or egg – to alter genes in a way that allows changes to be transmitted to the next generation is not legally permitted in most countries. Engineering somatic cells – the cells of our body whose genes are not carried to our progeny – is regulated and advanced and is happening in many situations. Cells of patients with certain kinds of cancers can be engineered so that their immune system is modified to attack cancerous cells, because these treatments are given to patients who are severely ill, the risks are outweighed by the potential benefits.

Acceptance of innovation

The acceptability of such interventions is high; indeed, they are welcomed. The value of gene therapies for well defined inherited diseases is weighed against safety concerns coming from the toxicity of the gene delivery system, which may need to be injected at high concentrations for the treatment to be effective. Patient groups that are keen on treatment and cures for a wide variety of diseases, such as sickle cell disease, thalassemias, and, potentially, muscular dystrophies, Huntington's disease, and a variety of other familial diseases, drive demands for drugs and genetic treatments. The costs of research and therapy, safety and efficacy considerations, long timelines, the operation of market forces, etc. are limiting the use of these technologies. There is no groundswell of opposition to the idea of engineering somatic cells for therapy in humans.

Contrast the relative acceptability of genetic engineering approaches in human health to the situation in agriculture and horticulture. In the U.S. and Canada, almost all the maize, soybean, and cotton is made from genetically engineered plants designed for pest resistance or herbicide resistance. Canada is a large producer of canola, almost all of it from genetically engineered plants. These products are exported all over the world, including to Europe and India, where they are not allowed to be grown. Yet a large proportion of Europe's animal feed is imported from the Americas and is from genetically modified plants.

The arguments against genetically modified food come from a range of positions: about their safety and the consequences of environmental release, about how they result in monoculture and reduce diversity, and how they result in the domination of big seed and farm companies that hold the key patents and control the market.

However, genetically modified crops have been grown and consumed safely for decades now. The dominance of seed companies is not a consequence of the use of genetically modified plants and is present independent of whether their products are genetically modified or not. Monoculture and the dominance of marketable varieties have happened independent of the use of genetically modified plants. The classical green revolution – i.e. the breeding of high yielding varieties of cereals – did not require laboratory genetic engineering. Some of the criticism may be justified but the fact remains that acceptance of innovation in some areas is slow or never, and remarkably fast in other related areas.

Synthetic biology and biotechnology provide another context where genetic engineering is growing rapidly. Several drugs – insulin is a common example – are made by recombinant DNA technology and directly injected into us. The anti-malarial natural product artemisinin can now be made by microbes in the laboratory and does not have to be extracted from plants. Many natural products are now synthesised in large amounts in the laboratory using genetic engineering.

The 'weight loss' drug semaglutide, which is the active ingredient in Ozempic and Wegovy, is a relatively recent example of synthetic biology's reach. Its natural equivalent in our bodies decays in minutes, but the synthetic version grown in baker's yeast can stay on for weeks, ensuring its efficacy. Synthetic biology has transformed the diagnosis of animal and plant diseases, made vaccines that have prevented millions of deaths of humans and livestock, and developed what are called biologics: genetically engineered antibodies and proteins that are used to treat cancers and other diseases, developed largely by energetic startups, followed usually by collaboration with big companies, these drugs are then expensively made when they eventually go off patent. Here, there is little or no lament against their being used in humans, except to despair of their cost and accessibility.

Wheels of the chariot

Ideas that move into application have emerged where they have been challenged, tested, discarded or accepted, and where societal debates on them have flourished. When the flexibility to put our ideas and test them diminishes, as in Europe in agriculture or the U.S. in infectious disease research, the global supply chains of ideas gets broken until these geographies reform or new geographies for ideas take root. How societies respond to ideas also affects how new potentially transformative new ones emerge. Trofim Lysenko and his acolytes managed to destroy Soviet agriculture by smashing the core ideas of genetics, and in doing so also managed to kill new ideas in biology. Mathematics and physics, lying outside his interest and remit, escaped his attention and thrived. One can selectively destroy the capacity for new ideas but this is never a stable route.

We do not find societies where only ideas thrive without any innovation – nor places where true innovation thrives without original ideas. But we can find societies where there is imitation and incremental development, standing on the discoveries and innovation of others. For true innovation, as opposed to imitation and catching up, a reasonable regulatory system is also needed. A completely risk-averse regulatory system is by definition very safe, allowing only those innovations to grow that have been tested by others elsewhere over the years. This results in a society that may become good at high-volume low-value products whose technological and market effectiveness has been demonstrated elsewhere. Not to be sniffed at, but certainly not sufficient for a large country like ours, and not sufficient to stimulate new and daring ideas.

With the acceleration of biotechnologies in all their diversity, rigorous but enabling regulatory oversight is essential. Today, information from genome sequencing in the context of how the environment and genes affect outcomes, partners with the growth of how we analyse information. This partnership powers the generation of new ideas about how life works and new ideas about what life itself is. These, in turn, will rapidly feed into new findings and new innovations.

If regulation is only about safety and curbing, and demanding compliance with an ever-changing process, it will curb enthusiasm for daring ideas and explanations about the complexities and meaning of life. Modest and unambitious approaches, in science engender, are a self-defeating oxymoron. In this highly regulated situation, both ideas and innovation, alike will happen elsewhere. Severe engineering of quality is what one will have to take pride in, at best.

The life sciences, unlike many other technologies, are simpler to scale, moving from ideas and discovery to innovations and applications. In particular, theory and computational approaches in the life sciences must be strongly encouraged and can be very effective. Narrowly demanding application and results can be counterproductive, yet focus and quality along with daring are required.

Fundamental and applied research are the wheels of the chariot. If we turn one wheel, we will go in circles. If we over-regulate, the chariot will be stuck in regulatory quicksand and we will go nowhere. If we under-regulate, we cannot steer the direction the horses are to take us, and they may well take us to a precipice. Wise regulation that not only deals with the present but also with an unknown and uncertain future will release human ingenuity and result in our ability to tackle the most complex and unforeseen challenges.

K. VijayRaghavan is the DAE Homi Bhabha Chair, TIFR National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bengaluru. vijay@ncbs.res.in

Most of the food consumed in India today is from non-native plants and animals adapted by ecosystems and 'engineered' by selective breeding. G K

Societies embrace gene therapy but resist genetic change in crops

Key Themes & Analysis

1. The Historical Context of "Bio-Engineering"

Ancient Engineering: Humans have been engineering life for over 10,000 years through domestication and selective breeding.

Non-Native Integration: Modern diets (e.g., the Indian aloo paratha) are comprised of organisms "engineered" by migration and breeding over centuries.

The Shift: The transition from slow, theory-less breeding to rapid, laboratory-based **genome engineering** represents a paradigm shift in human capability and responsibility.

2. The Paradox of Acceptance

The author categorizes genome engineering into three distinct compartments with varying levels of public trust:

Sector	Public Acceptance	Key Drivers/Barriers
Human (Somatic)	High	High demand for cures (Sickle-cell, Cancer); benefit outweighs risk.
Microbial (Synthetic)	Moderate/High	Production of Insulin, Malaria drugs, and vaccines; focus on cost/access.
Agriculture (GM Crops)	Low/Resistant	Concerns over environmental release, monoculture, and corporate patent

Sector	Public Acceptance	Key Drivers/Barriers
		monopolies.

3. The Regulatory Dilemma: "The Quicksand of Caution"

Risk vs. Innovation: A "completely risk-averse" regulatory system leads to imitation rather than innovation. It traps a nation in producing "high-volume, low-value" products rather than original breakthroughs.

The Lysenko Lesson: History (the Soviet era) shows that ideologically or poorly driven scientific regulation can destroy entire sectors of research and productivity.

Enabling Oversight: Regulation must be "rigorous but enabling." If it focuses solely on curbing and compliance, it stifles the "daring ideas" necessary to understand the complexities of life.

4. The Chariot Analogy

Wheels: Fundamental research (ideas) and applied research (innovation).

Steering: Wise regulation acts as the driver.

Under-regulation: Risks heading toward a "precipice" (ethical/ecological disaster).

Over-regulation: Leads to "regulatory quicksand" (stagnation).

LAKSHYA ACADEMY
Aim, Think & Achieve
www.lakshyaacademy.co I www.lakshyaiasacademy.com

Conclusion

The future of biotechnology in India depends on moving beyond "reverse engineering of quality" toward a culture of original discovery. To achieve this, the regulatory framework must evolve from a barrier into a bridge. As the life sciences become increasingly integrated with computational power, India must foster an environment where "modest and unambitious approaches" are rejected in favor of scientific daring. Ultimately, wise regulation is not just about safety; it is about releasing human ingenuity to tackle unforeseen global challenges while ensuring we steer the "chariot" of biotechnology toward values we collectively cherish.

UPSC PrelimsExam Practice Question

Ques:With reference to genetic engineering, consider the following statements:

1.Somatic cell gene therapy affects only the individual and is not inherited.

2.Germline gene therapy results in heritable changes.

3.Genetically Modified (GM) crops involve alteration of DNA using modern biotechnology tools.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

(a) 1 and 3 only

(b) 2 only

(c) 1, 2 and 3

(d) 1 and 2 only

Ans:c)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques:"Society shows differential acceptance of genetic engineering in healthcare and agriculture."Examine the reasons for this paradox.(**150 Words)**

Aim, Think & Achieve
www.lakshyaacademy.co I www.lakshyaiasacademy.com

Page 07 :GS III : Environment/ Prelims Exam

As global warming accelerates—with 2025 recorded as one of the three hottest years in history—extreme heat has transitioned from a periodic hazard to a systemic threat. The UN warns that the "safety margin" for biological life is shrinking. Extreme heat acts as a risk multiplier, intensifying existing vulnerabilities like droughts and pest outbreaks, and pushing agrifood systems—responsible for the livelihoods of over a billion people—toward a breaking point.

Higher temperatures are shrinking the safety margin that plants, animals, and humans rely on to function, say UN agencies. FILE PHOTO

Extreme heat threatens food systems, warn UN agencies

Reuters

Extreme heat is pushing global agrifood systems to the brink, threatening the livelihoods and health of more than a billion people, according to a new report by the UN's food and weather agencies.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) said heatwaves are becoming more frequent, intense and prolonged, damaging crops, livestock, fisheries, and forests.

For livestock, the report details a thermal humidity index that, when

Extreme heat intensifies droughts and pest outbreaks, and cuts yields once critical temperature thresholds are breached

breached, will trigger acute heat stress.

In dairy cattle, this manifests as a 15% to 25% drop in milk production and significant drops in fertility rates. Scientists have noted similar stressors in poultry, where extreme temperature spikes can lead to mass mortality events in facilities without industrial-level climate control.

"Extreme heat is rewriting the script on what farmers, fishers, and foresters can grow and when they can grow. In some cases it is even dictating if they can still work," said Kaveh Zahedi, head of FAO's climate change office. "At its core, this report is telling us that we face a very uncertain future," he said.

Recent climate datasets show global warming is accelerating, with 2025 ranking among the three hottest years on record, triggering more frequent and severe weather extremes.

Acting as a risk multiplier, extreme heat intensifies droughts, wildfires, and pest outbreaks and sharply cuts crop yields once critical temperature thresholds are breached.

The report said higher temperatures are shrinking the safety margin that plants, animals, and humans rely on to function.

Beyond just dehydration, extreme heat disrupts the rest period of plants. High nighttime temperatures force crops to maintain high respiration rates after dark, consuming the energy stores they built through photosynthesis during the day.

This exhaustion stunts growth and leads to pollen sterility in staple crops like maize and rice, where heat during the critical flowering window can altogether prevent fertilisation, resulting in empty husks. Marine heatwaves are also becoming more frequent, depleting oxygen levels in water and threatening fish stocks. In 2024, 91% of the world's oceans experienced at least one marine heatwave, the report said.

Risks rise sharply as warming accelerates. The intensity of extreme heat events is expected to roughly double at 2C of warming and quadruple at 3C, compared to 1.5C, the report said.

Mr. Zahedi said every one-degree rise in average global temperatures cuts yields of maize, rice, soya, and wheat by around 6%.

The FAO and WMO said piecemeal responses were inadequate and called for better risk governance and early-warning weather systems to help farmers and fishers take preventive action.

Key Impacts on Agrifood Systems

1. Impact on Crop Physiology

The report highlights that heat does more than just dehydrate plants; it disrupts their fundamental metabolic cycles:

Nighttime Respiration: High temperatures at night force plants to maintain high respiration rates. This consumes the energy stores (carbohydrates) created through photosynthesis during the day, effectively "exhausting" the plant and stunting growth.

Reproductive Failure: Extreme heat during the critical "flowering window" causes **pollen sterility** in staples like maize and rice. This leads to fertilization failure, resulting in "empty husks" and total yield loss.

2. Livestock and Poultry Vulnerabilities

The report utilizes a **Thermal Humidity Index (THI)** to measure the threshold where acute heat stress begins:

Dairy Cattle: Breaching the THI leads to a **15% to 25% drop in milk production** and a significant decline in fertility.

Poultry: Temperature spikes cause mass mortality, particularly in regions lacking industrial-grade climate-controlled housing.

3. Marine and Aquatic Stress

Marine Heatwaves: In 2024, **91% of the world's oceans** experienced at least one marine heatwave.

Oxygen Depletion: Warmer waters hold less oxygen, threatening fish stocks and disrupting the livelihoods of coastal fishing communities.

Conclusion: From Piecemeal to Systemic Response

Lakshya Academy Aim, Think & Achieve www.lakshyaacademy.co I www.lakshyaiasacademy.com

The FAO and WMO emphasize that current "piecemeal" or reactionary responses are no longer sufficient to protect the global food supply. The report calls for a fundamental shift toward:

Risk Governance: Integrating heat stress into national agricultural policies and labor laws (to protect outdoor workers).

Early-Warning Systems: Providing farmers and fishers with actionable, real-time weather data to take preventive measures before heatwaves strike.

Adaptive Science: Developing heat-resistant crop varieties and sustainable cooling solutions for livestock.

As heat "rewrites the script" for global agriculture, the focus must shift from merely surviving disasters to building a food system that can function within a much narrower thermal safety margin.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: **The "Thermal Humidity Index (THI)" is used to assess:**

(a) Soil fertility levels

(b) Heat stress in livestock

(c) Ocean temperature changes

(d) Crop yield variability

Ans:b)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques:"Extreme heat has emerged as a systemic risk to global agrifood systems."Discuss its impacts on crops, livestock, and fisheries.(**150 Words)**

India presents a unique paradox where women's **electoral participation** (voter turnout) has reached near parity with men (around **66-67%**), yet their **political representation** remains stagnant at approximately **14%** in the Lok Sabha and even lower in many State Assemblies.

Why quotas alone won't increase women's representation

While reservation can address the issue of underrepresentation, its impact is likely to be shaped by existing inequalities related to class, caste etc

DATA POINT

Krishangi Sinha
Sanjay Kumar

As debate around the Women's Reservation Bill resurfaces, the central question is no longer whether quotas will increase representation, but whether they can overcome the deeper structural barriers that limit women's participation in politics. Evidence from a Lokniti-CSDS study suggests that while reservation may expand opportunities, it does not by itself ensure that more women are able to sustain political careers. Over the past decades, Indian women have become a significant electoral force. However, this rise in participation has not translated into representation. Women remain underrepresented as candidates and elected representatives, highlighting a gap between voting and political presence.

The Lokniti-CSDS study shows that while women vote in large numbers, their involvement in more active forms of political engagement remains low **(Table 1)**. Across categories such as locality, education, caste, class, and age, a large majority of women (74%-84%) report being "not at all active" in electoral processes beyond voting. This pattern cuts across socio-economic groups, suggesting that limited political engagement is not confined to specific sections. While voting has become more inclusive, deeper forms of political participation remain restricted.

The limited presence of women in politics is also shaped by party-level decisions. Candidate selection remains a critical barrier **(Table 2)**. Around 44% of women respondents agree that even when a man and a woman are equally qualified, political parties prefer male candidates. These perceptions point to a structural bias in candidate selection processes, where "winnability" is often invoked to justify the preference for male candidates. When asked whether there is a lesser possibility for a woman to win against a man therefore women should not contest against men, 17% agreed.

Table 3 indicates that women's political participation is shaped by a combination of structural, social, and individual constraints. About 22% of women identify patriarchal structures as the biggest obstacle, followed by household responsibilities and barriers such as lack of awareness or interest.

Nearly two-thirds of women report some degree of patriarchal dominance within their households **(Table 4)**. At the same time, about 66% report having no freedom at all to participate in political activities such as attending meetings or rallies **(Table 5)**. The overlap between household dominance and limited political autonomy suggests that the private sphere remains a key site of political exclusion. Even before institutional barriers come into play, many women face restrictions within their own homes. These structural and social barriers also influence how women perceive politics as a career. Only about 28% of women expressed willingness to enter politics **(Table 6)**.

Low willingness reflects not simply a lack of interest, but the cumulative effect of restricted autonomy, limited access, and exclusionary political structures.

Data suggests that women's political participation in India is marked by a paradox: high electoral participation alongside limited political engagement and representation. While reservation can address the issue of numerical underrepresentation, its impact is likely to be shaped by existing inequalities related to class, caste, education, and access to resources. Without parallel changes, including greater inclusion in party candidate selection and enhanced autonomy within households, quotas alone may not substantially broaden the pool of women entering politics.

Existing setbacks

The data for the tables were sourced from Lokniti-CSDS study

TABLE 1: Women's electoral participation across socio-economic groups. All figures in %

	Active electoral participation		
	Not at all active	Somewhat active	Highly active
Locality			
Rural	76	16	8
Urban	80	15	5
Level of education			
Non-literate	84	12	4
Upto primary	75	19	6
Upto matriculation	75	17	8
12th pass/intermediate	75	17	8
College and above'	78	15	7
Age groups			
18 to 25 years	83	13	4
26 to 35 years	78	17	6
36 to 45 years	75	18	7
46 to 55 years	75	17	9
55 years and above	75	16	9
Caste/communities			
Upper castes	78	15	7
OBC	75	18	7
SC	81	14	5
ST	81	15	5
Muslims	70	22	8
Others	81	12	6
Economic class			
Poor	83	13	4
Lower	78	16	6
Middle	74	19	7
Upper class	78	14	9

TABLE 2: Public perceptions of gender bias in candidate selection and electoral success

Statement	Agree	Somewhat agree/ somewhat disagree	Disagree
Even when a man and a woman are equally good candidates, political parties always prefer a man over a woman while giving tickets	44	30	15
Lesser winning probability of women compared to men	17	31	41

Note: All figures are in percentage. Others did not know

TABLE 3: Perceived barriers to women's political participation

Type of barrier	(%)
Patriarchal structure	22
Household responsibility	13
Individual barriers	12
Cultural norms	7
Constrains related to finance or political structure	6
Negative image of politics	3
Other barriers	1

TABLE 4: Extent of patriarchal dominance within households

Level of dominance	(%)
Strong dominance	12
Some dominance	23
Low dominance	31
No dominance at all	28

TABLE 5: Women's autonomy in participating in political activities

Level of freedom	(%)
No freedom at all	66
Very little freedom	12
Some freedom	12
A lot of freedom	10

TABLE 6: The willingness of women to enter politics

Willingness	(%)
No	61
Yes	28
No opinion	12

Krishangi is a researcher with Lokniti-CSDS, Sanjay Kumar is a Professor, Psephologist and Election Analyst.

Views expressed by the authors are their own independent views, it does not reflect the views of the institution

1. Structural Biases in Candidate Selection

The Lokniti-CSDS study points out that political parties often act as "gatekeepers." Even when women are equally qualified, parties frequently prioritize men based on a perceived **"winnability"** factor.

The "Token" Problem: In local bodies, where 33-50% reservation exists, the "Sarpanch-Pati" phenomenon (where husbands exercise actual power behind a female face) remains a hurdle.

Access to Tickets: Without internal party quotas, women are often restricted to seats reserved by law, rather than being integrated into the party's mainstream leadership.

2. The Intersection of Caste and Class

The debate over **"quota within quota"** (OBC reservation within the women's quota) underscores that "women" are not a monolithic group.

The Resource Gap: Women from marginalized castes often face a "double disadvantage"—lacking both the social capital of dominant castes and the financial resources required for modern campaigning.

Elite Capture: There is a concern that without sub-quotas, reservation might primarily benefit women from politically influential or affluent families, leaving the most marginalized voices unheard.

3. Household and Social Constraints

The "private sphere" is often the first site of political exclusion:

The Dual Burden: Domestic responsibilities and the "care economy" leave little time for the rigorous, 24/7 nature of political campaigning.

LAKSHYA ACADEMY Aim, Think & Achieve www.lakshyaacademy.co I www.lakshyaiasacademy.com

Limited Autonomy: About **66%** of women report having no freedom to participate in political activities like rallies, often due to patriarchal household structures.

Current Status: The 2026 Legislative Hurdle

In a significant update, the **Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026**, which sought to fast-track the 33% reservation by linking it to the 2011 Census (and bypassing the delay of a new census), was **defeated in the Lok Sabha on April 17, 2026**.

Fact	Details
Votes in Favour	298
Votes Against	230
Result	Failed to reach the required **2/3rd majority** (352 votes).

Fact	Details
Core Conflict	Opposition parties demanded a **de-linkage** from delimitation and the inclusion of a specific **OBC quota**.

Conclusion: Beyond the Ballot Box

Increasing women's representation requires a holistic approach that moves beyond "mechanical" reservation:

Economic Empowerment: Reducing the financial barrier to entry.

Internal Party Democracy: Incentivizing parties to nominate women in non-reserved seats.

Institutional Support: Creating "safe" political spaces through anti-harassment policies and child-care support for legislators.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques:The term "Sarpanch-Pati phenomenon" refers to:

(a) Joint decision-making by elected couples

(b) Informal exercise of power by male relatives of elected women representatives

(c) Legal provision for spousal governance

(d) Reserved seats for married couples

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Critically analyse the challenges in implementing women's reservation in legislatures.Discuss the debate around "quota within quota."**(150 Words)**

Page 12: GS III : Indian Economy / Prelims Exam

The Indian textile and apparel sector, a cornerstone of the country's export economy and a major employment generator, experienced a complex performance in **FY 2025-26**. While the sector showed a marginal contraction in US dollar terms, it demonstrated resilience through growth in rupee terms and significant expansion in non-traditional markets.

Key Performance Indicators (FY26)

1. The Currency Divergence

The sector's performance varied significantly depending on the currency of valuation:

Dollar Terms: Total exports reached **$35.7 billion**, a **2.21% decline** from $36.6 billion in the previous year. This reflects global inflationary pressures and fluctuating demand in Western markets.

Rupee Terms: Total exports (including handicrafts) rose to **₹3,16,334.9 crore**, representing a **2.1% increase**. This indicates that while the global "pie" shrunk in dollar value, the domestic value generated remained stable or grew slightly.

2. Segment-wise Breakdown

Ready-Made Garments (RMG): Remains the "engine" of the sector. Despite global headwinds, RMG exports grew by **2.9%** in rupee terms (₹1.39 lakh crore).

Cotton & Raw Materials: A weaker spot in the portfolio, with cotton yarn, fabrics, and made-ups seeing a **3.89% decline** in dollar terms.

Apparel General: Total garment exports saw a minor dip of **1.36%** in dollar terms.

Market Diversification: Beyond the West

A critical highlight of the FY26 data is the successful diversification of export destinations. India registered growth in over **120 destinations**, reducing its over-reliance on a few major economies.

Market	Growth Rate (April 2025 – Feb 2026)
UAE	**22.3%** (Likely fueled by CEPA benefits)
Japan	**20.6%**
Spain	**15.5%**

Textile, apparel exports decline in FY26

The Hindu Bureau
COIMBATORE

Export of textiles and apparel saw a 2.21% decline in FY 2025-26 in dollar terms and 2.1% increase in rupee terms.

In dollar terms, the total textile and garment exports were $35.7 billion in the financial year that ended on March 31, 2026 compared with $36.6 billion in the previous year.

Of this, export of cotton yarn, fabrics, and made-ups decreased 3.89% and total garment exports declined 1.36 %.

In rupee terms, according to an official press statement, India's textile sector continued to demonstrate resilience in global markets with total textile exports, including handicrafts, increasing from ₹3,09,859.3 crore in 2024-2025 to ₹3,16,334.9 crore in 2025-2026.

Among the major segments, ready-made garments of all textiles remained the largest contributor to textile exports, rising from ₹1,35,427.6 crore to ₹1,39,349.6 crore (2.9% hike).

Export growth was registered in more than 120 destinations during the April 2025 - February 2026 period over the corresponding period of the previous year, with notable growth in key markets such as the UAE (22.3%), U.K. (7.8%), Germany (9.9%), Spain (15.5%), and Japan (20.6%).

Market	Growth Rate (April 2025 – Feb 2026)
Germany	9.9%
United Kingdom	7.8%

Conclusion: Navigating Global Headwinds

The marginal decline in dollar terms suggests that the global apparel market remains cautious. However, the growth in the UAE and Japan points to the effectiveness of recent **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)**. For India to regain the $40 billion+ trajectory, the focus must remain on:

Value Addition: Moving from yarn/fabric exports to high-fashion ready-made garments.

Cost Competitiveness: Addressing high logistics costs and power tariffs that hamper the "Made in India" tag against competitors like Vietnam and Bangladesh.

Synthetic Fiber Growth: Expanding beyond cotton into the Man-Made Fiber (MMF) segment, which currently dominates global demand.

LAKSHYA ACADEMY
Aim, Think & Achieve
www.lakshyaacademy.co I www.lakshyaiasacademy.com

India's post-LWE future, from red sun to new dawn

Arindam Banerjee

Founding partner at the Policy and Development Advisory Group (PDAG), New Delhi

Shashi K. Verma

Founding partner at the Policy and Development Advisory Group (PDAG), New Delhi

Governance in Left Wing Extremism (LWE)-affected regions must evolve into inclusive transformation built on state legitimacy and trust

Fourteen years ago, in West Midnapore in West Bengal and Simdega in Jharkhand – two districts worst affected by Left Wing Extremism (LWE) – young tribal girls often practised hockey with battered sticks and boundless resolve, even juggling footballs on uneven earth amid sal forests. As Prime Minister's Rural Development Fellows with the Ministry of Rural Development, our close work with the District Magistrates in both districts, and, many other initiatives, helped set up an astroturf hockey academy and a block football training centre under the central government-financed Integrated Action Plan.

Today, Salima Tete carries forward Simdega's hockey legacy as captain of the Indian women's hockey team, and Mamta Hansda from that same rugged football centre in West Midnapore is now part of the Indian women's senior football team. These are sweat-soaked fields which speak a thousand words.

A change in the arc

In 2009, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh identified LWE as the most serious internal security threat facing the nation. In April 2010, India witnessed its deadliest Maoist attack on security forces, resulting in the loss of 76 Central Reserve Police Force personnel in Dantewada (Chhattisgarh). For years afterward, the violence did more than claim lives; it hollowed out the state's everyday legitimacy, crippled routine governance across vast areas, and normalised an abnormal reality in which citizens lived in fear of both gunfire and encounters.

Sixteen years later, on March 30, 2026, during the Budget session of Parliament, Union Home Minister Amit Shah informed the House that India is now free of Maoist insurgency. It is important to acknowledge what this has required – and what it signals. There has been visible political commitment, improved coordination, and a willingness to work closely with State governments across political parties, through joint strategic and operational planning, institutional focus and an insistence that security gains are consolidated. But if security has delivered a decisive outcome, governance in LWE-affected regions must now deliver a decisive transformation. Over the last decade and a half, in our work with dedicated governance action plans in some of these difficult regions, one lesson stands out: security gains do not complete the journey; they create an opening. What secures the peace dividend is governance credibility led by an empathetic and focused political and executive leadership.

For a post-LWE future, that credibility must translate into local value economies in erstwhile affected districts and blocks that have long lived with the double bind of extractive development and a resource curse. Learnings from dedicated area-based plans – Jungle Mahal in West Bengal; Saranda and Budha Pahad in Jharkhand; Malkangiri in Odisha; and the recent multi-year Bastar plan in Chhattisgarh – point to a common direction; a community-centred, diversified economic strategy that strengthens local consumption, attracts patient public and private capital, and restores community stewardship over the commons. These plans have mattered not because they are perfect, but because they signalled a necessary shift – from episodic interventions to sustained reconstruction, with the state showing up not occasionally, but reliably.

The foundation to build on

That shift must now be deepened by strengthening forest produce systems with fair procurement and local processing; agroforestry and allied livelihoods; incentives for small and medium enterprises through capital support; community-led eco-tourism; and regional economic plans that enable stable employment close to home. Designed with safeguards, and ensuring benefit-sharing and genuine local ownership, these measures can lead to dignified livelihoods that end insecurity and fear.

However, this economic transition will be achieved only if administrative presence sustains beyond the strategic "area domination" exercise. Rural roads, schools, health services, banking access, women's collectivisation, nutrition systems and accountable frontline delivery must be pursued swiftly and predictably, alongside patient community listening and respectful citizen engagement – treating people not as "beneficiaries" but as rights-bearing stakeholders.

This is why the post-LWE moment is not an end in itself, but a moral threshold. We must acknowledge the paradox at the heart of the "red corridor" – the tribal citizen. The Adivasi household in a forested hamlet beyond the last motorable road has lived for decades between the state and the non-state – between the gun and the encounter, the slogan and the raid, forced levy and forced silence. A citizen, yet invisible; a rightful claimant of the Constitution, yet peripheral in its everyday delivery. When policy language speaks of "incidents" and "districts", it often forgets that the unit of pain is a human being: a mother whose son was recruited; a schoolgirl whose hostel barely functioned; forest-dwelling communities whose rights claims still await clearance; a young man who learnt to fear the uniform and the insurgent alike. These sons and daughters of red earth cannot be mere statistics; and peace is not merely the absence of firing. The danger now is quieter: as violence recedes, policy attention can recede too. But the harder work of legitimacy-building demands sustained presence. Thus, a humane post-LWE approach, we feel, should signal a new dawn.

The framework

First, forthcoming policy focus in LWE areas should enable stronger rights, credible justice, functioning institutions and visible opportunity – with dignity as the organising principle. U.S. conflict expert John Paul Lederach's idea of conflict transformation is relevant here: conflict is not simply a malfunction to be suppressed; it signals broken relationships that must be rebuilt through institutions, trust and fairness.

Second, initiate a structured, region-specific post-LWE transformation action plan for identified districts and blocks, jointly designed and executed by the Union government and respective States, that ties outcomes to finance. Our public policy does not lack schemes; it lacks convergence and accountable delivery in hard and complex geographies. We propose the AIEEEE governance framework for this transition – accountability, innovation, evidence, equity, empathy and efficiency.

This framework can drive focused convergence – the Aspirational Districts and Aspirational Blocks framework for monitoring; tribal-first missions such as Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyaan (PM-JANMAN) and Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DAJUGA) for saturation and inclusion; the Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan for capacity-building of field systems; and constitutional provisions such as Article 275(1) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) grants, backed by 16th Finance Commission-enabled devolution – to close last-mile gaps at the panchayat level.

Third, the humane state must show up through a small set of non-negotiables, beginning with rights with respect. Justice must be believable: this requires humane policing, effective grievance redress, faster case disposal, legal aid, and a principled review of prolonged undertrial cases and minor-offence burdens disproportionately borne by Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Finally, harness and consolidate youth aspirations towards a secure future. Sport has proved its quiet power in these landscapes – discipline, pride, pathways, belonging – but aspiration must extend beyond sport into higher education scholarships, residential schooling, skilling aligned to local economies and women-led enterprises.

The final mile in India's LWE journey is as much psychological as it is administrative, and this closing chapter must build strong structural confidence in the state and governance. These regions are not India's periphery; they are India's core, and the true spirit of cooperative federalism must enable a shift from counter-insurgency coordination to inclusion-led, post-conflict transformation.

GS PaperIII:Internal Security

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question:"The success of counter-insurgency lies not in 'clearing' territories but in 'building' governance legitimacy."Discuss in the context of Left Wing Extremism in India.. **(150 Words)**

Context : The analysis emphasizes that while security forces have "cleared" and "held" these regions, the final stage of "building" must now take center stage. Peace is not merely the absence of violence but the presence of robust, empathetic governance.

1. The AIEEEE Governance Framework

To navigate this post-conflict transition, the author proposes a specialized framework to ensure that state presence is meaningful and sustained:

Accountability: Ensuring clear responsibility for service delivery.

Innovation: Using local solutions for unique geographical challenges.

Evidence: Data-driven policy monitoring (e.g., Aspirational Districts).

Equity: Prioritizing the most marginalized tribal (Adivasi) households.

Empathy: Treating citizens as rights-bearing stakeholders, not just "beneficiaries."

Efficiency: Streamlining delivery to the last mile.

2. Economic Reconstruction & Local Value Chains

A "local value economy" is needed to replace extractive development. Key pillars include:

Forest Systems: Strengthening Minor Forest Produce (MFP) procurement and local processing.

Agroforestry: Incentivizing diversified livelihoods close to home.

Eco-Tourism: Leveraging the natural beauty of erstwhile "Red Corridor" regions through community-led initiatives.

Capital Support: Incentivizing small and medium enterprises to attract patient private capital.

3. Human Centric Justice & "Non-Negotiables"

For the state to gain lasting legitimacy, justice must be visible and believable:

Humane Policing: Shifting from "area domination" to community-friendly law enforcement.

Legal Aid: Reviewing prolonged undertrial cases that disproportionately affect SC/ST communities.

Saturation of Rights: Implementation of the **Forest Rights Act (FRA)** and **PESA** in letter and spirit to empower Gram Sabhas.

Conclusion: The Psychological Final Mile

The "Post-LWE" moment is described as a **moral threshold**. The goal is to move the tribal citizen from the periphery of the Constitution to its core. Success is reflected in the stories of youth like **Salima Tete** and **Mamta Hansda**, where sports and education serve as pathways to dignity and national belonging. The focus must now shift from counter-insurgency to an **inclusion-led transformation** to ensure the "Red Sun" never rises again.

LAKSHYA ACADEMY
Aim, Think & Achieve
www.lakshyaacademy.co I www.lakshyaiasacademy.com