

The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

Saturday : 23May, 2026

Edition : International Table of Contents

Page 01 Syllabus : GS I &II : Social Issues & Justice / Prelims Exam	'Birth rate, infant deaths fall in India'
Page 05 Syllabus : GS II : International relations / Prelims Exam	India, Cyprus elevate bilateral ties to strategic partnership; ink pact for defence cooperation
Page 06 Syllabus :GS II :Social Justice / Prelims Exam	Centre asks States, U.T.s to step up Ebola surveillance
Page 08 Syllabus :GSII :Indian Polity / Prelims Exam	Interpreting the 'rise' of the Cockroach Janta Party
Page 10 Syllabus :GS I &II : Social Issues & Justice / Prelims Exam	Lakshmi may have ended up a child bride
Page 08 : Editorial Analysis Syllabus : GS II :International Relations	Cyber warfare is outpacing global legal accountability

Page 01 :GS I &II : Social Issues and Justice / Prelims Exam

The recent Sample Registration Survey (SRS) report highlights a significant demographic shift in India over the last decade (2014–2024). It reflects a steady decline in birth rates and infant mortality alongside a marginal dip in death rates. While these trends indicate successful health interventions by central and state governments, the data underscores persistent structural disparities between rural and urban regions that hinder equitable national development.

Key Findings & Data Points

- **Declining Birth Rate:** The national birth rate (live births per 1,000 population) decreased from **21 in 2014 to 18.3 in 2024**, signaling the progress of India’s demographic transition toward stabilizing population growth.
- **Marginal Drop in Death Rate:** The crude death rate (deaths per 1,000 people) saw a slight reduction, moving from **6.7 to 6.4** over the ten-year period.
- **Substantial Progress in IMR:** The national Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) achieved a significant milestone, dropping from **39 to 24** deaths per 1,000 live births, indicating improved neonatal and maternal healthcare.

‘Birth rate, infant deaths fall in India’

Ramya Kannan
 CHENNAI

The bulletin from the recent Sample Registration Survey (SRS) 2024 provides the sharpest picture yet of India in the throes of demographic transition.

As per the latest estimate, while the country’s birth rate has fallen between 2014 and 2024 and the death rate is down marginally, good gains have been reported with the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), amid substantial progress made over the last decade. However, vast gaps persist between rural and urban areas and progress across the country is uneven, making the call for equitable growth and appropriate deployment of resources particularly sound.

Changing trends

India’s birth rate, death rate and infant mortality rate have fallen over the last decade, though vast rural-urban gaps and uneven progress persist



Indicator	2014	2024	Difference
Birth rate	21	18.3*	Down by 2.7 points
Death rate	6.7	6.4**	Down by 0.3 points
Infant mortality rate	39	24 [#]	Down by 15 points

■ Kerala has a single-digit IMR of 8, the lowest in the country

*Births per population of 1,000

**Deaths per population of 1,000

Infant deaths per 1,000 live births

Source: SRS Bulletin 2024

The country’s birth rate – live births per 1,000 population – fell from 21 in 2014 to 18.3 in 2024, while the death rate (deaths per 1,000 people) is down from 6.7 to 6.4. The IMR, recorded as the number of deaths per thousand live births, has dropped from 39 to 24. While the overall

performance is creditable, indicating several measures being launched by the Centre and States to improve healthcare outcomes, the disappointment is in the relatively worse performance in rural areas. In fact, they drag the country’s averages down substantially.

For instance, while the rural birth rate fell from 22.7 to 20.2 in the given decade, the simultaneous decadal performance in the urban areas was better – the birth rate fell from 17.4 to 14.7. In the rural areas, the death rate fell from 7.3 to 6.8 between 2014 and 2024, and in the urban segment, it was at 5.5 in 2014 and went up marginally to 5.6 -- still a better performance than in rural areas.

The gains of urban areas in this bulletin are probably the most appreciable result in the field of IMR, dropping from 26 to 17 by nine points. While it has dropped 16 points from 43 to 27 in the rural areas during the same period, it is still further away from the national target to reduce the IMR to single digits.

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

The Rural-Urban Divide (Key Disparities)

- **Birth Rate Divergence:** Urban areas showed sharper declines in fertility. The urban birth rate dropped from **17.4 to 14.7**, while the rural birth rate lagged behind, dropping from **22.7 to 20.2**.
- **Death Rate Variances:** The rural death rate decreased from 7.3 to 6.8. Conversely, the urban death rate experienced a marginal, slight increase from **5.5 to 5.6**, though it remains notably lower than the rural average.
- **Gaps in Infant Survival:** Urban areas dropped their IMR by 9 points to reach **17**. While rural areas showed a larger absolute drop of 16 points (from 43 down to 27), the rural IMR remains stubbornly high and far from the national goal of achieving single-digit infant mortality.

UPSC Relevance & Analytical Takeaways

- **Demographic Transition & Dividend:** The shrinking birth rate confirms India is moving through the advanced stages of demographic transition. To maximize the "demographic dividend," policy focus must shift from population control to building quality human capital through health and education.
- **Public Health Infrastructure Evaluation:** The overall positive trend reflects the successful scale-up of public health schemes like the National Health Mission (NHM), Poshan Abhiyaan, and institutional delivery initiatives (Janani Suraksha Yojana).
- **The Problem of "Rural Drag":** The data clearly indicates that rural deficits pull down national averages. This underscores a lack of advanced healthcare accessibility, higher malnutrition levels, and lower health awareness in remote hinterlands.
- **Policy Imperative for Equitable Growth:** Regional and rural-urban imbalances point toward the urgent need for "differential programming"—allocating healthcare resources and medical professionals disproportionately toward lagging rural pockets rather than a one-size-fits-all policy.

Conclusion

The SRS data demonstrates that India's healthcare interventions are yielding tangible results, particularly in saving infant lives and transitioning toward population stabilization. However, the widening rural-urban chasm serves as a critical policy reminder. For India to achieve truly sustainable and inclusive development, future governance must prioritize bridging the healthcare infrastructure gap in rural areas, turning uneven progress into equitable national growth.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: Which of the following trends were highlighted in the recent Sample Registration Survey (SRS) report for India (2014–2024)?

1. Decline in Birth Rate
2. Reduction in Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)
3. Increase in Crude Death Rate nationally
4. Faster fertility decline in urban areas compared to rural areas

Select the correct answer using the code below:

- (a) 1, 2 and 4 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 4 only
- (d) 1, 2, 3 and 4

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: India is entering the advanced stages of demographic transition. In this context, examine the opportunities and challenges associated with the demographic dividend. **(150 Words)**

www.lakshyaacademy.co | www.lakshyaaiacademy.com

Page 05 :GS II :International Relations / Prelims Exam

India and the Republic of Cyprus have elevated their bilateral relationship to a **Strategic Partnership**, signaling New Delhi's expanding geopolitical and economic footprint in the Eastern Mediterranean. The transition marks a shift toward deeper defense industrial cooperation, counter-terrorism alignment, and critical maritime supply chain resilience. Against the backdrop of the finalized India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and ongoing West Asian disruptions, the partnership positions Cyprus as a critical strategic anchor and trade gateway for India into the European Union.

Key Pillars of the Elevated Partnership

- **Defense and Security Roadmap:** The two nations finalized a 5-year Bilateral Defence Cooperation Roadmap (2026–2031). It focuses on military-to-military engagement, joint training, and cybersecurity. An MoU between the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) and the Cyprus Defence and Space Industries Cluster opens avenues for Cyprus to procure Indian defense hardware.
- **Sovereignty and Territorial Integrity:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi explicitly emphasized mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. This statement serves as a reiteration of New Delhi's principled support for Nicosia against Northern Cyprus, which is recognized as an independent state only by Turkey.
- **Counter-Terrorism and Maritime Safety:** Both nations established a Joint Working Group on counter-terrorism to step up intelligence sharing. Additionally, a technical arrangement on Search and Rescue (SAR) matters was signed to bolster coordination in shipping corridors.
- **Economic Connectivity and IMEEC:** Amid shipping disruptions from regional conflicts, Cyprus pushed to activate the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC). By establishing a 'Friends of IMEEC' grouping within the EU, Cyprus aims to position itself as a key transshipment hub for cargo flowing between India and Europe.
- **Financial and People-to-People Links:** Capital market cooperation was advanced through an agreement between the Cyprus Stock Exchange and the NSE International Exchange at GIFT City. In addition, the planned launch of direct flights, a Unified Payments Interface (UPI) rollout by next year, and fast-tracked Migration and Mobility talks aim to ease the movement of Indian IT professionals and students.

India, Cyprus elevate bilateral ties to strategic partnership; ink pact for defence cooperation

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

In a sign of India's expanding involvement in the eastern Mediterranean region, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that India's ties with Cyprus are based on "respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity".

Welcoming Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides, Mr. Modi laid out an ambitious canvas for the bilateral relationship, presenting Cyprus as an "investment gateway" to the European Union (EU). Cyprus currently holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

India and Cyprus announced the elevation of their bilateral ties to the level of a "strategic partnership", and also formed a road map for defence cooperation. Cypriot officials



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides in New Delhi on Friday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

said that Nicosia is interested in buying items from the Indian defence industry. "India-Cyprus relations are strong as well as futuristic. Our relationship is based on democracy and the rule of law. We respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. India is totally committed to these principles and will remain so in the

future," the Prime Minister said in a statement, after the two sides held delegation-level talks and sealed multiple agreements at Hyderabad House.

Mr. Modi's reference to "sovereignty and territorial integrity" is being widely interpreted as support to Cyprus as it continues to deal with Northern Cyprus, which Turkey re-

cognises as a separate state.

Bridge to the EU

In his remarks, the visiting President presented Cyprus-India ties as an entry point for India's wider relationship with the EU, with which New Delhi concluded a Free Trade Agreement earlier this year.

Following the talks, senior Cypriot officials said that Cyprus is eager to provide transshipment facilities for the global traffic of commodities and cargo that are affected by the U.S.-Israel war against Iran. To help remedy the current disruption in supply chains, Cyprus has started powering the IMEEC and has formed a 'Friends of IMEEC' grouping within the EU. "We had extensive discussions on IMEEC. We agree that we need to start the building blocks in or-

der for IMEEC to be realised," a Cypriot official said. Direct flights will soon be launched between India and Cyprus, Cypriot officials said.

They also shared an ambitious plan to use the India-Cyprus relationship to energise the IMEEC project that will also restructure the security architecture of the eastern Mediterranean where Turkey is an active player because of its stakes in northern Cyprus.

According to a joint statement issued at the end of the visit, Mr. Modi and Mr. Christodoulides welcomed the signing of an MoU between the Cyprus Defence and Space Industries Cluster and the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers. The two sides will intensify collaboration in cybersecurity, the maritime domain, and emerging technologies, it said.



www.lakshyaacademy.co | www.lakshyaaiasacademy.com

UPSC Relevance & Analytical Takeaways

- **Geopolitical Alignment in the Eastern Mediterranean:** The partnership allows India to balance geopolitical dynamics in the Mediterranean. Turkey's repeated pro-Pakistan stance on the Kashmir issue at multilateral forums has prompted India to actively cultivate deeper, institutionalized ties with Turkey's immediate neighbors, Greece and Cyprus.
- **Gateway to the European Union:** With Cyprus holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, a strengthened relationship gives India a vocal ally within the EU bloc. This is highly beneficial for capitalizing on the recently concluded India-EU Free Trade Agreement.
- **Strategic Diversification of Defense Exports:** Cyprus' interest in Indian defense equipment aligns with India's domestic objective of transforming from a top global arms importer into an export-oriented defense manufacturing hub. It also allows Indian defense firms to collaborate with EU-backed security initiatives.

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

- **De-risking Global Supply Chains:** By supporting IMEEC and exploring maritime transport alternatives, India and Cyprus are working to build resilient trade routes. This provides alternative corridors that bypass current maritime choking points in West Asia.

Conclusion

The transformation of India-Cyprus ties into a strategic partnership reflects a calculated, multifaceted approach in New Delhi's foreign policy. By intertwining defense diplomacy with economic projects like IMEEC and financial hubs like GIFT City, India has secured a reliable anchor in the Eastern Mediterranean. Moving forward, the swift implementation of the defense roadmap and mobility pacts will determine how effectively this diplomatic upgrade translates into a counterweight against regional challenges and an engine for India-EU economic integration.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: With reference to the recent elevation of India–Cyprus relations to a Strategic Partnership, consider the following statements:

1. Cyprus supports India's position on territorial sovereignty and integrity.
2. India and Cyprus signed a 5-year Bilateral Defence Cooperation Roadmap.
3. Northern Cyprus is recognized as an independent state by all European Union members.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: "India's foreign policy increasingly combines geopolitics, economic connectivity, and defense diplomacy." Examine this statement in the context of India–Cyprus relations. **(150 Words)**

Page 06:GS II :Social Justice / Prelims Exam

In response to the World Health Organization (WHO) declaring the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued a proactive national advisory. Spearheaded by Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava, the Centre has directed all States and Union Territories to fortify their disease surveillance, entry-point screening, and hospital preparedness. While the immediate risk of transmission to India is deemed low, the rapid globalization of trade and travel demands absolute institutional readiness to prevent any potential health crisis.

Centre asks States, U.T.s to step up Ebola surveillance

Health Secretary says growing international trade and travel necessitated adequate preparedness; States directed to reinforce infection prevention and control practices in healthcare facilities

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Following the World Health Organization's (WHO) declaration of the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, the Centre has directed all States and Union Territories to strengthen surveillance, hospital preparedness, and rapid response systems.

Union Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava, in a letter to States and Union Territories, said countries bordering the affected regions, including South Sudan, were at high risk of transmission, though the present risk to countries outside the affected African region remained low.

The Health Secretary, however, cautioned that growing international trade and travel necessitated "adequate preparedness and response capacities at all levels of the health system".

The States have been asked to intensify surveillance under the Integrated



Red Cross workers gather to disinfect a hospital before handling the body of a person who died of Ebola in DRC. REUTERS

Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) for unusual clusters of fever and symptoms suggestive of Ebola disease, particularly among individuals with recent travel history to affected regions.

The advisory listed symptoms such as fever, weakness, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhoea, stomach pain, rash, and red eyes as warning signs requiring close monitoring.

The Ministry has also circulated a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) covering disease surveillance, sample collection,

storage and referral mechanisms for suspected Ebola cases.

Isolation facilities

The States have been instructed to identify designated isolation facilities and dedicated ambulances with infection prevention and control measures in place. The advisory also called for ensuring adequate availability of trained healthcare personnel, personal protective equipment (PPE), logistics support, laboratory facilities, and critical care infrastructure.

The Health Secretary

said the Indian Council of Medical Research's National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune, remained fully equipped to test samples from suspected Ebola cases identified either at Points of Entry or within communities.

The communication stressed the need for establishing coordination mechanisms between NIV Pune, airport, and port health authorities; State Surveillance Units; and District Surveillance Units for timely referral and testing of samples.

Infection prevention

The States have further been asked to reinforce infection prevention and control practices in healthcare facilities, including triage systems, isolation protocols, hand hygiene, environmental cleaning, and biomedical waste management.

The States and districts have been asked to keep multidisciplinary Rapid Response Teams in readiness for disease surveillance, outbreak control, and clinical management of suspected cases.

Key Directives & Frameworks Issued by the Centre

- **Intensified Surveillance under IDSP:** States must actively leverage the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) to track and monitor unusual clusters of unexplained fever. Immediate attention is mandated for individuals returning from high-risk African corridors (including DRC, Uganda, and South Sudan).

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

Daily News Analysis

- **Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs):** The Ministry has circulated uniform protocols detailing specific methods for disease tracking, stringent sample collection, contamination-free storage, and prompt referral mechanisms for suspected cases.
- **Targeted Screening for Key Symptoms:** Healthcare facilities are ordered to vigilantly monitor for an array of early "dry" and advanced "wet" Ebola symptoms:
 - Early/General: High fever, severe weakness, muscle pain, intense headache, and sore throat.
 - Gastrointestinal/Advanced: Vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, unexplained skin rashes, and red eyes.
- **Strengthening Local Isolation Infrastructure:** Regional administrations must dedicate specific ambulances outfitted with Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) infrastructure and designate isolated hospital wards ready to handle highly infectious patients.

Public Health Infrastructure & Multi-Tier Coordination

- **Centralized Laboratory Diagnostics:** The Indian Council of Medical Research's National Institute of Virology (NIV) in Pune is designated as the primary nodal laboratory. It is fully equipped with bio-safety infrastructure to test and sequence samples arriving from communities or Points of Entry (PoEs).
- **Multi-Agency Integration:** The advisory mandates an airtight communication network bridging NIV Pune, state and district surveillance units, and Port/Airport Health Organization (PHO/APHO) authorities to fast-track sample transfers and avoid bureaucratic delays.
- **Institutional Hygiene Upgrades:** Healthcare centers must reinforce baseline clinical triage systems, strict hand hygiene protocols, specialized environmental cleaning, and secure biomedical waste management to minimize hospital-acquired (nosocomial) transmission.
- **Rapid Response Teams (RRTs):** State and district administrations are required to maintain active, multidisciplinary RRTs on standby, ensuring clinicians, epidemiologists, and lab technicians can be deployed instantly to control localized outbreaks.

UPSC Relevance & Analytical Takeaways

- **Proactive vs. Reactive Governance:** This step demonstrates a pivot toward "predictive public health defense." By initiating preventative infrastructure alignment before a single case enters the territory, India minimizes the chaos seen during early phases of historic pandemics.
- **Global Health Security & IHR Compliance:** Acting immediately on a WHO PHEIC declaration highlights India's adherence to International Health Regulations (IHR). It reflects the reality that in an interconnected global economy, local health security is deeply dependent on international biosecurity frameworks.
- **Strengthening One Health Infrastructure:** The reliance on institutional synergy (IDSP, ICMR-NIV, and state health boards) underscores the necessity of a robust "One Health" architecture, showing how critical administrative federalism is when responding to trans-boundary biological threats.

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

- **The Challenge of Emerging Strains:** Global reports indicate this specific surge involves the *Bundibugyo* virus species, a rarer Ebola strain lacking widely approved vaccines or target therapeutics. This lack of medical countermeasures makes non-pharmaceutical interventions—like strict quarantine and IPC protocols—the primary line of defense.

Conclusion

The Centre's directive on Ebola surveillance represents a timely, preventative exercise in national health security. By mobilizing the IDSP network and establishing clear administrative SOPs, India is fortifying its public health frontier against global biological vulnerabilities. While the immediate localized threat remains minimal, the structural enforcement of triage systems, rapid response protocols, and interstate laboratory networks will inevitably enhance India's long-term resilience against any future infectious disease outbreaks.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: The National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune functions under:

- (a) Directorate General of Health Services
- (b) Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)
- (c) National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)
- (d) Department of Biotechnology

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques :Examine the role of the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) in strengthening India's response to infectious disease outbreaks. **(150 Words)**

The rapid ascent of the "Cockroach Janta Party" (CJP)—garnering millions of social media followers within days—serves as a striking case study of India's shifting political landscape. Triggered as a satirical response to an institutional elite's remark labeling unemployed youth as "cockroaches," the movement has quickly exposed a deep-seated disconnect between youth aspirations and traditional institutional politics. This phenomenon reflects a broader global trend where decentralized, digitally synchronized outrage fills the void left by a decaying public life and weakening collective institutions.

Interpreting the 'rise' of the Cockroach Janta Party

In just four days, a formation in India calling itself the 'Cockroach Janta Party' has accumulated a following that established political organisations often spend years building. Meme pages, Instagram reels, and semi-ironic political formations began aggregating at remarkable speed, prompting comparisons with Bangladesh and Nepal, where youth-led mobilisations appeared capable of unsettling entrenched political arrangements through digitally synchronised anger. Increasingly, many are wondering whether this is the future of politics itself: reactive and emotionally charged, and organised less around long-term political structures than around symbolic enemies and collective outrage.

The excitement is understandable because younger people increasingly feel disconnected from institutional politics and representative structures that appear distant from their lived anxieties about work, aspiration, insecurity, and exhaustion. Social media allows individuals who otherwise experience themselves as politically isolated to suddenly participate in moments of collective emotional intensity. A meme or slogan can create the feeling of political participation within hours. Yet, the deeper question is whether politics organised primarily through synchronised outrage can sustain itself beyond moments of emotional intensity.

The erosion of collective social life

The real crisis is not simply institutional decline or ideological exhaustion. The deeper crisis concerns the erosion of collective social life itself. Public life has weakened, and many shared spaces through which people once experienced collective belonging have steadily deteriorated. In the past, political formations emerged through unions, campuses, neighbourhood associations, and everyday cultures of participation embedded within ordinary social life. Those structures created continuity and emotional investment that allowed political life to exist beyond immediate reaction. Increasingly, however, societies produce individualised subjects who remain emotionally hungry for collective belonging while lacking the social conditions that are necessary to sustain it.

Perhaps this reflects one of the deeper contradictions of modernity itself. The language of liberty that emerged after the French Revolution was historically tied to emancipation and collective self-rule. Yet, over time, especially within consumer societies shaped by fossil-fuel-driven development, freedom increasingly came to mean individualised freedom of choice: the freedom to consume, compete, and privately pursue aspiration. Public life gradually weakened as private life expanded.



Soumyajit Bhar
Senior Assistant Professor at the School of Liberal Studies, BML Munjal University

Under such conditions, digitally synchronised crowds become psychologically powerful because they temporarily relieve isolation. A common enemy allows fragmented individuals to feel collectively present again.

This is where the distinction between synchronisation and solidarity becomes important. Contemporary platforms are extraordinarily effective at producing synchronisation. Millions can feel emotionally aligned within hours through shared outrage or a symbolic target. However, emotional synchronisation is not the same as durable collective life. One produces intensity; the other requires continuity, memory, emotional investment, and long-term commitment. Contemporary politics increasingly forms around antagonism rather than shared futures because outrage circulates faster than organisation, and anger is easier to sustain digitally than commitment.

Cross-country comparisons require caution

This is why comparisons with Bangladesh and Nepal require caution. The underlying conditions do not appear fundamentally different. In both cases, initial reactive energy eventually moved toward more organised political formations. The decentralised swarm did not remain decentralised; it was redirected, institutionalised, or exhausted. That suggests the deeper issue may not concern student politics or youth mobilisation in one country versus another. The broader structural tendencies – individualisation, fragmented public life, and weakening collective institutions – increasingly appear shared across much of the contemporary world.

This is where reflections emerging from the recent Iran-Israel-United States tensions become relevant. Decentralised resilience is only possible when sustained by deeper emotional and material structures capable of surviving beyond moments of immediate confrontation. Distributed action cannot function indefinitely through outrage alone. For decentralised systems to remain coherent without centralised command at every stage, there must exist some larger shared horizon: collective ethical commitment, emotional continuity, historical memory, or durable symbolic attachment. Decentralisation is not merely organisational or technological; it is also emotional, cultural, and material.

What increasingly appears visible in contemporary digital politics is the coexistence of enormous emotional energy with weakening structures of collective endurance. This is where Jacques Lacan's famous intervention during the May 1968 French student uprisings becomes relevant. At a moment when many intellectuals

imagined the protests as radically emancipatory, Lacan responded with an unsettling observation: "What you aspire to as revolutionaries is a master. You will get one." His point was not merely cynical. Revolt against one symbolic order does not automatically abolish mastery. More often, desire reorganises itself around new forms of certainty and authority.

This insight becomes important in societies shaped by individualised aspiration and emotional fragmentation because politics organised primarily through opposition derives much of its coherence from the enemy itself. The enemy stabilises identity and keeps the crowd emotionally synchronised. But once movements move toward governance, contradictions emerge, compromises become necessary, and symbolic clarity weakens. The crowd that formed around shared antagonism then discovers that sustaining a collective world is far more difficult than synchronising anger.

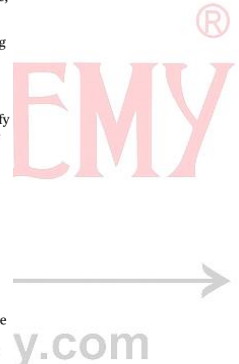
There is also a deeper material contradiction. Developmental systems shaped by fossil-fuel-driven modernisation not only intensify individualisation but also structurally reproduce centralisation. Energy systems, logistics networks, financial architectures, digital platforms, and megacities all operate through immense concentrations of coordination and power. Even the platforms through which decentralised political energies circulate are themselves among the most centralised technological systems in history.

The central point

This creates a contradiction at the heart of contemporary anti-establishment politics. People increasingly desire decentralisation emotionally while inhabiting systems structurally dependent on centralisation. The crowd can challenge power, but reorganising power requires engagement with material systems that push relentlessly toward concentration, scale, and control. Unless societies can begin rebuilding the emotional, institutional, and material foundations necessary for collective life – trust, shared responsibility, organisational memory, and durable public commitment – reactive synchronisation will continue to reproduce cycles of outrage without durable transformation.

The central question is not whether decentralised political energy can emerge. It clearly can. The real question is whether contemporary societies still possess the capacity to transform synchronisation into solidarity, and moments of reactive mobilisation into enduring collective forms, or whether every rupture will eventually reproduce new concentrations of power and, as Lacan warned, new masters.

Digital political mobilisation also reflects fragmentation beneath contemporary public and social life



Contextual Background of the "CJP"

- **The Genesis:** The satirical movement emerged immediately following a controversial remark made during a Supreme Court hearing on May 15, 2026, where sections of unemployed youth turning to alternative media and RTI activism were compared to "cockroaches" and "parasites."
- **The Digital Boom:** Tapping into acute Gen-Z anxieties regarding high graduate unemployment, structural flaws in national exams (like NEET), and institutional distance, the movement surpassed the Instagram follower counts of established traditional parties within less than a week.

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

- **The Satirical Manifesto:** Framed as "Secular, Socialist, Democratic, and Lazy," the movement utilizes irony to push for serious structural changes, such as banning post-retirement Rajya Sabha berths for judges, enhancing women's political reservation, and eliminating predatory educational evaluation fees.

Key Analytical Frameworks & Themes

1. The Disconnection from Institutional Politics

- The overwhelming traction of the movement underlines a growing estrangement of the youth from formal representative architectures.
- Traditional systems are increasingly perceived as unresponsive to structural, lived anxieties, including lack of job security, occupational burnout, and dwindling upward economic mobility.

2. The Erosion of Collective Social Life

- Historically, sustainable political actions were anchored in physical, persistent community organizations: labor unions, student campuses, neighborhood forums, and cooperative societies.
- Modern, market-driven development and hyper-individualistic consumerism have steadily commercialized or degraded these shared public spaces, leaving citizens socially fragmented.
- While people remain deeply anxious for collective belonging, they lack the foundational, everyday social structures required to nurture it organically.

3. "Synchronisation" vs. "Solidarity"

- **The Power of Digital Synchronization:** Modern social media algorithms are extraordinarily adept at creating instantaneous, mass alignment around a shared symbolic target or a common enemy. This temporary alignment offers individuals an immediate relief from isolation.
- **The Deficit of Solidarity:** Unlike transient digital outrage, genuine political solidarity demands structural continuity, institutional memory, deep emotional investment, and long-term material accountability. Anger circulates rapidly online, but durable organizational structures require patience and friction.

4. Cross-Country Parallels and Political Realities

- While comparisons are drawn to recent youth-led upheavals in Nepal and Bangladesh, historical precedents demand analytical caution.
- Decentralized "swarms" or crowds cannot sustain momentum indefinitely on outrage alone. In almost all cross-country models, initial reactive energy must eventually undergo institutionalization, be redirected into organized political formations, or face systemic exhaustion.
- Rebellion against a specific symbolic order does not automatically dismantle power imbalances; as psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan famously noted during the May 1968 French protests, a decentralized revolt running purely on opposition often compromises its clarity when transitioning to actual governance, occasionally paving the way for newer forms of authority.

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

5. The Material Contradiction of Modernity

- There exists a fundamental paradox in modern anti-establishment digital movements: citizens emotionally crave decentralized, flattened systems, yet they inhabit everyday societies built on immense material centralisation.
- Energy infrastructures, global logistical pipelines, financial networks, and the very digital platforms facilitating this dissent are among the most centralized, highly concentrated structures in human history. Reorganizing power effectively requires an active engagement with these physical systems of scale, rather than just virtual opposition.

Conclusion

The rise of the Cockroach Janta Party is an indicator of a deeper structural malady: a massive store of collective youth energy clashing with a severely weakened infrastructure for long-term political endurance. It proves that while digital platforms can easily assemble a crowd around shared anger, they cannot automatically forge a sustainable alternative future. For contemporary mass movements to evolve from reactive synchronization into lasting societal transformation, India's youth and civil society must look beyond screen-mediated friction and actively rebuild the material, institutional, and emotional foundations of everyday public life.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: Which of the following best describes the concept of “digital synchronization” in modern politics?

- (a) Long-term institutional political mobilization through trade unions
- (b) Instantaneous online alignment around a shared issue or symbolic target
- (c) Constitutional coordination between political parties
- (d) Centralized state control over digital platforms

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Distinguish between “digital synchronization” and “political solidarity.” Why do many online movements struggle to sustain long-term political transformation?(150 Words)

- **Localized Progress:** In Chandauli district, the percentage of women (aged 20–24) married before the age of 18 saw a major decline, dropping from 33.7% in NFHS-4 (2015-16) to 17.2% in NFHS-5 (2019-21).
- **Frontline Compensation Realities:** Anganwadi workers, who serve as the primary enforcement mechanism at the village level, operate as "volunteers" rather than permanent government employees. They receive a modest monthly honorarium of approximately ₹8,000—well below standard minimum wage benchmarks—and lack post-retirement security benefits or pensions.

Structural Bottlenecks & Socio-Economic Drivers

1. The Perceived "Economic Burden" (Bojh)

In agrarian economies driven by subsistence farming, severe poverty forces families to view daughters as financial liabilities. This pressure is compounded by large family sizes and limited localized livelihood opportunities, sometimes driving vulnerable households into seasonal distress migration and agricultural child labor.

2. Social Taboos and Patriarchal Control

Parents frequently fast-track early marriages out of a fear of dilution of caste endogamy (marrying within the community). As youth gain access to digital tools and look toward autonomous partnerships, older generations often tighten control by arranging early marriages to avoid perceived breaches of community or religious boundaries.

3. Administrative Red Flags (Age Falsification)

A recurring challenge highlighted by local administrations is the manipulation of statutory identification documents. Families planning underage marriages frequently approach local governance units (Gram Panchayats) attempting to artificially inflate a minor's age from 15 or 16 to 18 on their Aadhaar cards to bypass legal checks.

- **Statutory Teeth:** The **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006**, provides the primary legal backing, framing child marriage as a cognizable and non-bailable offense.
- **Village-Level Monitoring:** Under central guidelines, **Child Welfare and Protection Committees (CW&PC)** are mandated at the grassroots level. In practice, these panels often remain dormant until activated by civil society networks (such as the KAWACH program run by the British Asian Trust), which provide technical training, list-keeping methods, and reporting tools to local leaders (Pradhans).
- **The Power of Convergence:** Effective prevention relies on tying social change to economic self-interest. Local committees deter families by warning them that violating the PCMA disqualifies them from state welfare incentives, such as the MukhyamantriSamuhikVivah Yojana (which provides direct cash transfers to brides who marry after the legal age of 18).

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

- **Peer-Led Surveillance:** By inducting youth representatives directly into village protection committees, administrations have created an informal intelligence network. Minor girls facing impending forced marriages increasingly flag their situations to school peers, who then escalate the data to local authorities for timely family counseling.

UPSC Relevance & Analytical Takeaways

- **The Gendered Impact of Frontline Labor:** The relies-on-women nature of rural enforcement highlights a key policy paradox. Frontline workers, many of whom are survivors of child marriage themselves, leverage deep community trust to execute state directives, yet they navigate institutional vulnerability due to low honorariums and a lack of formal employee benefits.
- **Social Capital vs. Hard Policing:** The Chandauli model proves that legal coercion (police intervention) works best as a absolute last resort. Sustainable eradication occurs via the accumulation of local social capital—using empathetic counseling led by female village heads and Anganwadi workers to address parental anxieties about security and caste.
- **The Intergenerational Cycle:** Preventing child marriage directly cuts down maternal mortality rates (MMR) and infant mortality rates (IMR). Malnourished teenage mothers are structurally vulnerable to obstetric complications and low-birth-weight infants, making early marriage prevention a primary pillar of public health planning.

Conclusion

The evolving battle against child marriage in Uttar Pradesh highlights a shift from top-down legislative commands to a decentralized, community-led defense system. While statutory laws like the PCMA 2006 establish critical legal boundaries, real progress is won on the ground by underpaid Anganwadi workers and resilient youth leaders. To sustain this momentum and completely eliminate the practice, public policy must move beyond relying solely on the volunteerism of frontline workers. India needs systematic investments in rural secondary education, formalization of frontline health administrative roles, and targeted economic alternatives for vulnerable families to permanently break the cycle of early marriage.

Page :08 : Editorial Analysis

Cyber warfare is outpacing global legal accountability

Recent tensions involving the United States, Israel and Iran highlight a clear shift in how force is exercised today. According to reporting and policy analyses, the recent strikes were accompanied not only by conventional military action but also by cyber operations, which has included the hacking of news websites and widely used applications to disrupt communication and influence the information environment. The use of cyber means is not an isolated development, but is part of a broader pattern in which digital disruption operates alongside traditional military force. Cyber operations are increasingly being used to support conventional military action, including by disrupting communication and defence systems ahead of physical strikes.

Recent cyber incidents during the conflict have been linked to groups such as the Handala Hack Team, which has claimed responsibility for attacks on entities including a U.S.-based medical technology company. While such activity shows how cyber operations can extend conflict well beyond physical battlefields, it remains unclear how the law responds to this shift.

Establishing threshold is difficult

In reality, international law does not lack relevant principles. The prohibition on the use of force under Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter, along with the framework of state responsibility, applies to cyberspace in principle. When cyber operations affect infrastructure or essential services, serious legal issues may arise. Determining when such conduct crosses the threshold and becomes sufficiently serious to be classified as an internationally wrongful act or a prohibited use of force is the most complicated part. Such actions could lead to state responsibility and even claims for compensation, in theory. In practice, however, establishing this threshold remains extremely difficult.



Iyoti Singh
Advocate based in Delhi, researching cyber warfare and the use of force under international law

Cyber conflict is challenging traditional principles governing force and state responsibility

This gap between what the law allows and what actually happens has become increasingly visible. As noted in recent analyses, including those by Just Security, victims of cyber operations rarely succeed in bringing cases before courts or obtaining remedies through legal processes. The problem, therefore, is not simply whether the law applies, but whether it can actually be used.

A major reason for this gap lies in attribution. To establish a breach of international law, the act must be attributed to a state. However, cyber operations are, by their nature, secretive and routed through multiple networks and jurisdictions. Even when governments are reasonably certain about who is responsible for the operation, it is much harder to translate that into legally admissible evidence. This creates a gap between political certainty and legal proof.

Concerns that hinder litigation

The unavailability of an appropriate forum for such disputes is also a practical constraint. Sensitive cyber disputes are unlikely to be heard by international courts, including the International Court of Justice, without the consent of states. Domestic courts also face similar challenges, particularly because foreign states are often protected by sovereign immunity. As a result, there are very few forums where cyber-related claims can be effectively heard. There is also a strategic reason why states may avoid legal processes. Bringing a case might escalate inter-state tensions or invite retaliation and may require the disclosure of sensitive intelligence or capabilities. For this reason, many cyber incidents are handled politically or diplomatically, rather than through courts.

Another challenge is evidence. Cyber incidents involve technical data, classified intelligence and complex chains of causation. It can therefore be extremely difficult in a court setting to show who carried out an operation, how much damage it

caused, and how it led to specific harm. This makes legal action both complicated and uncertain. International awareness of this matter is reflected in instruments such as the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime and the United Nations Convention against Cybercrime, which aim to create a broader global framework to address incidents of cybercrime. However, these initiatives primarily focus on cybercrime and law enforcement. They fall short in addressing issues of state responsibility when cyber operations are part of geopolitical conflict.

The result is a growing mismatch. Incidents of cyber operations are becoming more frequent and, in some cases, more damaging. Yet, they rarely lead to legal consequences. This does not imply that international law is no longer relevant, but it does suggest that applying existing legal frameworks to this type of conflict remains a significant challenge.

India must help shape cyber norms

This is a particularly significant issue for a country such as India. In recent times, India has become increasingly reliant on digital infrastructure across sectors such as finance, energy and governance. As a result, it faces both greater vulnerability and has a larger stake in shaping international regulations. Strengthening domestic cyber resilience is important, but it is also essential to engage actively in international discussions on accountability, attribution and responsible behaviour in cyberspace.

The challenge, therefore, is not only to recognise that cyber operations have become part of modern conflict but also to ensure that the law is able to respond in a meaningful way. If cyber operations continue to expand without credible pathways to accountability, the gap between law and reality will only widen, leaving a form of conflict that causes real harm, yet remains largely beyond the reach of the law.

GS Paper II: International Relations

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question: "Cyber warfare has blurred the distinction between conventional conflict and digital aggression." Discuss in the context of evolving global geopolitical tensions. (250 Words)

Context:

The recent geopolitical tensions involving the United States, Israel, and Iran have underscored a profound shift in modern warfare, where digital disruption systematically accompanies conventional military force. Rather than operating in isolation, cyber operations—such as cutting-edge communications hacking, infrastructural sabotage,

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

and information warfare—are now standard tools used to soften defense systems prior to physical kinetic strikes. However, as non-state actors like the Handala Hack Team extend the digital battlefield, the global legal apparatus is struggling to keep pace. This creates a dangerous mismatch between accelerating technological capabilities and the enforceable reality of international law.

Key Strategic and Technical Challenges in Cyberspace

1. The Threshold Challenge (Article 2(4) Interpretation)

- **The Principle:** In theory, international legal frameworks are not absent. The prohibition on the threat or use of force under **Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter** and the rules of state responsibility apply to cyberspace.
- **The Legal Friction:** The critical complication lies in defining the exact "threshold." Determining when a digital intrusion crosses the line from a minor domestic disruption or espionage into an "armed attack" or an "internationally wrongful act" remains highly ambiguous under existing treaty definitions.

2. The Attribution Gap (Political vs. Legal Certainty)

- To establish state responsibility and claim international legal compensation, a harmful cyber operation must be definitively linked to a sovereign state.
- By design, cyber operations are highly secretive, routed through proxy networks across multiple jurisdictions, and often executed by decentralized, non-state actors or shadow groups.
- This introduces an immense gap: while intelligence agencies may possess high **political and strategic certainty** regarding the culprit, translating that digital trail into **legally admissible evidence** that satisfies international judicial standards is exceptionally difficult.

3. Institutional Lack of Judicial Forums

- **International Limits:** International bodies like the International Court of Justice (ICJ) cannot hear sensitive inter-state cyber disputes unless both sovereign states explicitly consent to its jurisdiction—a rarity in high-stakes security matters.
- **Domestic Constraints:** Victims cannot easily seek redress in domestic courts either, as foreign states are traditionally shielded by the customary international law principle of **sovereign immunity**.

4. The Strategic Dilemma of Litigation

States frequently self-censor and deliberately avoid pursuing judicial remedies for major cyber incidents due to profound strategic calculations:

- **Escalation Risks:** Initiating a formal lawsuit can rapidly inflame inter-state tensions, inviting retaliatory physical or digital strikes.
- **Intelligence Exposure:** Proving a cyberattack in open court requires a state to disclose highly classified forensic capabilities, sensitive telemetry data, and intelligence-gathering methods, structurally compromising its own national security.

Daily News Analysis

- Consequently, states consistently choose to resolve cyber conflicts through opaque political, diplomatic, or covert retaliatory channels rather than open courtrooms.

The Regulatory Framework Matrix

The current global architecture remains fragmented, primarily focusing on domestic criminal enforcement rather than state-sponsored geopolitical conflict:

International Instrument Framework	Primary Legal Focus	Major Geopolitical Structural Shortfall
UN Charter Article 2(4)	Restricting the threat or use of force against territorial integrity.	Lacks clear, modern criteria to define when non-physical digital destruction constitutes an "armed attack."
Budapest Convention on Cybercrime	Harmonizing domestic cyber laws, data sharing, and criminal prosecution.	Focused almost entirely on non-state cybercriminals and local law enforcement; falls short of addressing state-sponsored warfare.
UN Convention against Cybercrime	Creating a global framework to combat organized digital crime.	Tailored to transnational criminal syndicates; structurally ill-equipped to handle state responsibility in active geopolitical conflicts.

UPSC Relevance & India's Strategic Imperatives

- Vulnerability of Hyper-Digitalization:** India's rapid, successful scale-up of digital public infrastructure (DPI)—including its financial networks (UPI), unified energy grids, and digital governance models—exponentially expands its domestic "cyberattack surface." A major state-sponsored strike could paralyze critical infrastructure without a single missile being launched.
- Shaping Global Cyber Norms:** As a digital superpower, India can no longer remain a passive rule-taker in international cyberspace regulation. New Delhi must actively lead and shape discussions within multilateral forums (like the UN Open-Ended Working Group) to formulate clear, legally binding norms on state attribution and state responsibility.
- The Need for "Cyber-Deterrence":** Relying purely on defensive domestic resilience is insufficient. India must combine technical fortresses with robust diplomatic doctrines, defining clear costs for state-sponsored digital aggression against its sovereignty.

Conclusion

The expanding operational reality of cyber warfare has outpaced the slow, consensus-driven evolution of international law. As the gap between digital capabilities and legal enforceability widens, cyberspace risks

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

degenerating into an anarchic domain where states inflict real-world economic and structural harm with absolute impunity. For a digitally reliant nation like India, bridging this chasm is a core national security priority. True global cyber security requires shifting the international paradigm away from treating digital strikes as mere law enforcement issues, working instead to establish verifiable, binding state-accountability frameworks that bring digital conflict firmly under the rule of law.

