

The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

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Page01: GS III : Science and Tech & Internal Security/ Preliminary Examination

Reports have recently emerged regarding an alleged leak of sensitive files and data related to Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP), India's largest nuclear power plant. The data is said to have been leaked through a contractor's third-party server (Yotta). Such cyber attacks or data breaches on Critical Information Infrastructure (CII) like a nuclear power plant pose serious strategic challenges to national security, cyber sovereignty, and the country's energy security.

Key Points and Detailed Analysis

(A) Background of the Incident and Scope of Data Leak

- **Nature of Data:** The leaked files are said to include engineering blueprints of KKNPP, cooling and ventilation systems, the structure of control systems, and lists of vendors/suppliers.
- **Medium of Breach:** The data leak occurred not directly from the nuclear plant's core network, but through a third-party cloud/server service provider (Yotta Server) and the digital infrastructure of a project contractor.
- **Ransomware/Leak Group:** Cyber hacker groups like 'World Leaks' are emerging as the names behind this data access.

(B) Key Security Concerns

- **Supply Chain Vulnerabilities:** Although main government networks may be secure, the weak cyber infrastructure of private contractors, vendors, and third-party servers becomes the 'weakest link' for the entire system.
- **System Mapping and Apprehension of Future Threats:** If an adversarial nation or hacker group obtains blueprints of the cooling, ventilation, and vendor network, they can map out the entire support system (System Mapping) and plan targeted sabotage or cyber attacks in the future.
- **The Illusion of Air-gapped Systems:** It is often claimed that the main control network of a nuclear plant remains completely disconnected from the internet (Air-gapped). However, the possibility of malware or data leaks through administrative or vendor networks always exists (as seen in the 2019 DTrack malware incident).
- **Lack of Transparency and Rapid Response:** Delays in public accountability and primary reporting during such incidents raise questions about the functioning of the security mechanism.



The reported data leak comes amid construction of four VVER reactors at the plant. FILE PHOTO

Leak of Kudankulam nuclear plant data sparks 'commotion'

P. Sudhakar
TIRUNELVELI

The leak of highly sensitive files of Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP), reportedly accessed by a ransomware group from a contractor's server, has triggered "absolute commotion" in the plant, KKNPP sources said on Wednesday.

After commissioning two 1,000 Mwe VVER reactors, KKNPP is building four more such units with Russian collaboration.

Sources said the top brass of the upcoming nuclear park is "completely clueless" about the development that poses security threat as it may let an adversary map the support system and identify vulnerabilities.

According to Reuters, more than 19,000 files dating between 2016 and mid-2025, and linked to KKNPP's engineering blueprints on control, cooling and ventilation systems, list of vendors and suppliers, etc. had been accessed by World Leaks.

Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited said the information claimed to be available in public domain pertains to "conventional balance of plant common service facilities" and does not relate to any nuclear safety or nuclear

security-related systems. The leak originated from a server hosted by third party provider Yotta. The plant's contractor, Anil Ambani's Reliance Group, has admitted that a "partial breach" had happened and the government had been informed.

"Suspicious activity on Yotta's server was noted on May 29 last and it was reported in June-end. Investigations by Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL), the project proponent, and Computer Emergency Response Team are on," the sources said.

When the KKNPP encountered a similar incident in 2019, wherein a North Korean malware infection on its administrative network exposed the plant's vulnerability, NPCIL had dismissed it saying their "unbreachable standalone network" was intact and no data could be accessed by any dark web.

Neither KKNPP's site director Ashok Bhatiya nor V.P. Sunil, Station Director (1 and 2), could be reached for their comments on this sensitive issue.

Senior manager of human resources and public relations Kannan, who usually keeps in touch with the media for occasional press statements, also did not pick up repeated calls.

(C) Stance of the Government and NPCIL

- **Claim of Being Limited to Non-Nuclear Security Systems:** According to Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL), the leaked information pertains to the 'Conventional Balance of Plant' (Conventional Balance of Plant Common Service Facilities), which has no direct connection to nuclear safety or nuclear critical systems.

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Daily News Analysis

- **Investigation Ongoing:** Taking cognization of the incident, a joint investigation is being conducted by the national cyber security agency CERT-In (Computer Emergency Response Team - India) and NPCIL.

(D) Way Forward and Policy Suggestions

- **Zero Trust Architecture:** All entities working in the critical infrastructure sector should adopt the 'Zero Trust' model, where no internal or external network is blindly trusted.
- **Strict Compliance with Vendor Cyber Security Standards:** For all contractors and third-party server providers working in the nuclear or defense sector, high-level cyber audits and compliance with guidelines from the NCIIPC (National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre) should be mandatory and continuous.
- **Regular Third-Party Cyber Audits:** Penetration Testing and cyber audits should be conducted periodically not just for internal networks, but for every public-private entity associated with the supply chain.
- **Strengthening the National Cyber Security Strategy:** Considering the growing cases of cyber attacks on India's critical infrastructure, an updated and comprehensive National Cyber Security Strategy needs to be implemented with immediate effect.

Conclusion

India's expansion in the nuclear energy sector is happening rapidly, and the construction of new reactors in Kudankulam is vital for the country's future clean energy needs. However, nuclear expansion is incomplete without securing this core energy infrastructure. The KKNPP data leak incident sends a clear message that cyber security cannot be limited to main servers alone; a strong security framework for the supply chain and associated private partners is equally imperative. India must bring about strict policy changes in cyber governance and vendor management to provide an impenetrable shield of digital security to its critical infrastructure.

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UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: 'Supply Chain Cyber Attack' refers to—

- (a) Disrupting a country's power supply
- (b) Attacking a core system through an organization's vendors, contractors, or third-party networks
- (c) A cyber attack solely on hardware manufacturing
- (d) Attacking internet service providers

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "In the digital age, national security is not limited to physical security alone; cybersecurity has also become an integral part of it." Discuss this in the context of India's nuclear energy sector. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

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- **Importance of Species-Centric Conservation:** Along with protecting ecosystems, species conservation is equally essential as they maintain ecological balance.
- **Role of Local Institutions:** International agreements become effective only when backed by local communities and local institutions.

4. Technology vs. Field-Based Ecology

- **Technological Revolution:** New technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), genomics, and environmental DNA (eDNA) have expanded the scope of research unprecedentedly.
- **Importance of Field Studies:** Despite modern technologies, technology cannot replace field-based studies ("Field Logic") conducted through direct contact with nature. Field experience is indispensable for drawing correct conclusions from data analysis.

5. Interdisciplinary Ecology and Public Health

- **Free-Ranging Dogs:** Rather than treating this merely as a stray animal issue, it was viewed from the perspectives of ecology, public health, waste management, and urban governance. Open garbage in cities is preventing the control of these dog populations.
- **Human-Wildlife Conflict & Disease Ecology:**
 - Study of the changing behavior of Asian elephants in the mining areas of Keonjhar, Odisha.
 - Community-level study of the economic and health losses caused by snakebites.
 - Molecular study on the effect of seasonal dietary changes on the gut microbiome of Indian wolves.

Relevance for UPSC

Mains Examination (GS Paper 3):

- Key recommendations of IWECC can be cited in answers related to biodiversity conservation, Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and human-wildlife conflict resolution.
- To analyze the shift from a "species-centric" to a "landscape-based" conservation approach.

Essay & Ethics:

- Helpful in expressing thoughts on balancing environmental conservation with development, and the precise and limited use of technology.

Prelims Examination:

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- Questions related to eDNA, Citizen Science, Western Ghats ecosystem, citizen science, and species behavior.

Conclusion

Indian wildlife ecology is no longer limited to merely describing wildlife; it is moving toward predicting future environmental changes and formulating evidence-based policies.

While adopting modern technologies (AI, eDNA), the success of conservation will depend on how effectively scientists and policymakers involve ground-level field experience ("Field Logic") and local communities in this process. As highlighted in the conference—until the distinct threads of science, policy, and society are woven together, building a sustainable conservation ecosystem will not be possible.

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "Shifting from 'species-centric conservation' to 'landscape-level conservation' is the need of the hour for biodiversity conservation." Explain. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

Page 08 : GS III: Indian Economy / Preliminary Examination

In the recently released trade data for June 2026, India's trade deficit has increased by 430%. At first glance, this figure appears alarming, but a detailed analysis of the import and export components reveals that India's economic foundation remains strong.

Despite global and domestic challenges such as the West Asia Crisis and the possibility of a weak monsoon, India's merchandise exports have delivered an outstanding performance.

1. Main Reasons for the Increase in Trade Deficit

The primary reason for the sharp rise in the trade deficit is a massive surge in merchandise imports, which is largely influenced by global shocks:

- **Crude Oil:** In June 2026, the import value of crude oil registered a 40% growth, primarily due to the sudden spike in global oil prices a few months prior.
- **Gold Imports:** Due to the West Asia crisis, global uncertainty persists, leading to higher gold prices. Doubling the import duty on gold in May further drove up its prices in June.
- **Fertilizers:** The West Asia crisis disrupted India's natural gas supply, which affected domestic fertilizer production. As a result, fertilizer imports saw a massive 201% increase (in terms of value).
- **Electronic Goods:** This is the only category where the import growth is driven by a surge in domestic manufacturing. Increased electronics assembly and manufacturing in India have raised the demand for foreign spare parts/inputs.

2. Structural Strength of India's Exports

Recent figures indicate that India's exports are no longer dependent on a single sector or product, but have diversified:

- **Strong Growth in Merchandise Exports:** In June 2026, merchandise exports grew by 15.5%, while a 16% growth was recorded in the first quarter (Q1 2026-27).
- **Improvement in Non-Petroleum Exports:** This growth was not solely driven by expensive petroleum products. Non-petroleum exports grew at a rate of 16.5% in June and 12.4% in Q1.
- **Market Diversification:** Despite the West Asia crisis, India expanded its exports to every other region of the world, excluding West Asia.
- **Volume Growth:** This increase in exports is not just due to rising global prices, but reflects a genuine increase in the total volume of goods exported.

3. Government Policy Measures and Reforms

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Export gains

India's trade weaknesses are becoming episodic, its strengths structural

India's trade data for June offers insights into how the country is weathering the West Asia crisis and the prospect of a deficient monsoon. The fact that the trade deficit jumped 430% in June would seem alarming. However, a deeper look at the composition of this deficit should ease a lot of that alarm. The bulk of the increase in the deficit was due to the sharp increase in merchandise imports in June. And within this, it was led by crude, gold, fertilizers and electronic goods. The value of crude oil imports rose 40% in June 2026, reflecting the skyrocketing prices of oil a few months earlier. Gold prices have also been rising as uncertainty over the West Asia situation persists. The doubling of gold import duties in May would also have pushed up prices in June. With India's natural gas supplies hit due to the West Asia constraints, it has had to import more fertilizer – 201% more by value over last June. The only one of these categories that has seen imports rise sharply due to domestic factors is the electronic goods segment. As India's electronics manufacturing and assembly grow, more parts are going to come from abroad to fuel this engine. The government is encouraging this, as seen in its decision last week to remove the basic customs duty on imported parts in the manufacture of display assemblies, lithium-ion cells and inductor coil modules. These are essential if India wants to boost its manufacturing of high-end electronics such as smartphones, laptops and smart TVs. Going ahead, the attempt should also be to manufacture as many of these inputs locally so that these supply chains can be made truly secure.

The good news is that India's merchandise exports have put on a strong showing, not only in June 2026, but throughout the first quarter of 2026-27. Merchandise exports grew 15.5% in June and by an even quicker 16% in Q1. This was not simply a buoyancy granted by costly petroleum exports, either. Non-petroleum exports grew by a robust 16.5% in June and 12.4% in Q1. This is almost precisely the duration of the West Asia crisis. The data show that India's exports to every region of the world except West Asia grew in Q1, and that a large portion of export growth was in volume terms as well as in value. Indian exporters are to be commended for diversifying so quickly. Service exports, however, grew only 2.9% in June and 6.2% in Q1. As Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran has warned, success in areas such as Global Capability Centres should not be considered an end in itself – there is still far to go, and complacency will rob India of its advantage in this area.

Daily News Analysis

The government has recently taken several steps to boost the electronics sector and secure the supply chain:

- **Abolition of Basic Customs Duty:** The government recently removed customs duty on imported components used in the manufacturing of display assemblies, lithium-ion cells, and inductor coil modules.
- **High-Level Electronics Manufacturing:** The main objective of this exemption is to accelerate the manufacturing of high-value electronic products such as smartphones, laptops, and smart TVs in India.
- **Future Strategy:** Rather than being limited to assembly alone, India will need to start manufacturing these inputs locally to make the supply chain self-reliant and secure.

4. Service Sector and Challenges

The performance of the service sector (Services Export) has been sluggish compared to merchandise exports:

- **Slow Growth:** In June, service exports grew by only 2.9%, and in the first quarter (Q1), by 6.2%.
- **Over-reliance on GCCs (Global Capability Centres):** Chief Economic Adviser (CEA) V. Anantha Nageswaran has warned that the success achieved in Global Capability Centres (GCCs) should not be considered the ultimate achievement.
- **Need for Caution:** To maintain its lead in the service sector, India must focus continuously on innovation alongside self-reliance, as even slight carelessness could undermine India's competitive edge.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the June 2026 trade data shows that India's trade deficit is the result of external and episodic shocks—such as global oil and gold prices and West Asia tensions. On the other hand, India's export growth points toward structural strength, where Indian exporters have countered global headwinds by rapidly adapting to new markets.

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UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: Consider the following statements:

1. A trade deficit occurs when a country's imports exceed its exports.
2. An increase in the trade deficit always signifies economic weakness.
3. The import of capital goods and raw materials can enhance production capacity in the long run.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question:How important are manufacturing, the services sector, and integrated participation in global value chains for India's long-term economic stability? Discuss.(10 Marks, 150 Words)

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Page 09 : GSII :International Relations

The Global Non-Proliferation Regime is currently passing through a deep moral and policy crisis. The impasse between Western countries and Iran regarding Iran's nuclear program highlights the double standards of this regime.

This article presents a critical analysis of the inequalities present within the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the anti-sovereignty policies of major powers, and the growing gap between 'nuclear-armed' versus 'non-nuclear' countries. The main argument of the article is that as long as disarmament is not implemented equally for all countries, achieving global nuclear stability is impossible.

Key Points & Analysis

A. Double Standards and Discrimination of the Non-Proliferation Regime

- **Unequal Rules:** The NPT divided the world into two classes—nuclear-weapon states ("Haves") and non-nuclear states ("Have-Nots"). While strict sanctions are imposed on non-nuclear countries, nuclear-armed countries (P5) are continuously modernizing their weapons.

- **Selective Enforcement:**

- Countries like India and Pakistan, which are not signatories to the NPT and possess nuclear weapons, have been accepted globally as strategic partners.
- Israel, whose possession of nuclear weapons is a well-known fact, never came under the scope of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspections.
- In contrast, Iran, which carried out enrichment within the framework of the NPT and accepted the strictest inspections under the JCPOA, is being subjected to continuous economic sanctions and military threats.

B. Historical Paradox and the Question of Moral Authority

- **Historical Context:** The foundation of the global nuclear regime is linked to the nuclear attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. This is the sole instance of the use of nuclear weapons in human history.

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The crisis at the heart of non-proliferation



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The present impasse over Iran's nuclear future lays bare the enduring hypocrisy at the heart of the global non-proliferation order. As talks in Doha stumble through disputes over frozen assets and verification mechanisms, Tehran is being pressed to accept full dismantlement of its enriched uranium stockpile in exchange for economic compensation for decades of sanctions, even as President Masoud Pezeshkian insists Iran will not relinquish its sovereign right to enrich uranium. The demand is unambiguous. Yet the five recognised weapons powers, and Israel, undeclared but widely known to possess the bomb, face no comparable ultimatum to disarm.

The current confrontation raises an unavoidable question: on what grounds should Iran relinquish a capability that nine nuclear states retain for themselves? The claim that Iran is uniquely dangerous, unstable, or aggressive is a conclusion in search of evidence, and cloaked in language by states whose own commitment to international law is selective at best.

Unequal rules
The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) institutionalised a hierarchy rather than dismantling it. It divided the world into nuclear "haves" and "have-nots," and enjoined the latter to restraint while the former continue to modernise their nuclear arsenals. Against this backdrop, the treatment of Iran is not an anomaly. India and Pakistan, both outside the NPT, possess substantial nuclear arsenals and are welcomed as strategic partners by the very powers that patrol the non-proliferation order. Israel, whose nuclear programme is an open secret, has never submitted to inspection and is never named in the discourse of proliferation risk. Iran, by contrast, pursued enrichment within a legal framework, submitted to the most intrusive inspection regime in the history of arms control under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and was "rewarded" with unilateral American withdrawal, the reimposition of sanctions, and the renewed threat of military destruction. Iran complied and got punished anyway.

There is a deeper historical contradiction that the current discourse labours to suppress. The global nuclear order is, in a fundamental sense, anchored in an act of unparalleled destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945. These remain the only instances in history of nuclear weapons being deployed in conflict. They established the catastrophic potential of such arms as well as the precedent that their use could be justified, and absorbed into the language of strategic necessity by the state that employed them. The U.S. survived this act morally, emerging successfully as the designated guardian of nuclear order.

This precedent complicates every subsequent moral claim. A state that has demonstrated the willingness to use nuclear weapons against civilian populations occupies a singular position when it seeks to regulate the ambitions of others. The authority it claims is derived from the fact of prior use, and from the geopolitical dominance that use helped to consolidate. Albert Einstein warned with characteristic precision that humanity must choose between abolishing war and facing annihilation. That choice stands only deferred, and most effectively by those with the largest arsenals.

The unravelling of the JCPOA remains one of the most instructive episodes in recent diplomatic history, precisely because it was so revealing. Negotiated painstakingly under the Barack Obama administration, the agreement represented a genuinely achieved instance of multilateral diplomacy. Its abandonment by the Donald Trump administration in 2018 sent a message that resonated far beyond Tehran. For any state observing this trajectory, the conclusion inescapably underscores that future arms agreements with the U.S. carry no guarantee of American compliance. It must be kept in mind that if the Iran nuclear crisis deepens further, the JCPOA's destruction will stand as its proximate cause.

An enduring paradox
The question, in the end, is not whether Iran should or should not enrich uranium. It is whether the framework within which that question is posed is coherent, consistent, or just. By any honest reckoning, it is none of these things. Until that framework is confronted directly, and not obscured by the language of non-proliferation, the contradictions at the heart of the nuclear age will continue to compound. The answer to that question has been available since 1955, when Einstein and Bertrand Russell unambiguously asserted that nuclear weapons must be abolished altogether, by all states, without exception, or the logic of deterrence will produce the catastrophe it claims to prevent. Seven decades later, that conclusion remains as sound as ever.

We stand at a crossroads in a world that has grown accustomed to the gun on the table, until the day it goes off. Selective enforcement of non-proliferation, punishing Iran for compliance while rewarding others for defiance, and the indefinite deferral of the NPT's disarmament obligation do not constitute a rules-based order. They constitute a system that has chosen, knowingly, to tolerate the most destructive weapons in history rather than eliminate them. That choice carries a cost. The only question is whether we confront it through policy or through catastrophe.

Daily News Analysis

- **Moral Crisis:** The country (United States) that used nuclear weapons against a civilian population declares itself the global custodian of the nuclear regime today. This situation raises questions about its moral authority to control the ambitions of other countries.
- **The Message of Einstein and Russell:** Citing the 1955 Einstein-Russell Manifesto, the article highlights that relying solely on 'Deterrence Theory' without the "complete elimination of nuclear weapons" is an invitation to an inevitable disaster.

C. Failure of the JCPOA and Crisis of Diplomatic Credibility

- **Importance of the JCPOA (2015):** This agreement reached during the Obama administration was a major success of multilateral diplomacy, which Iran fully adhered to.
- **Unilateral Withdrawal by the US (2018):** The Trump administration's withdrawal from this agreement without any concrete reason dealt a deep blow to the credibility of international agreements.
- **Conclusion:** This sequence of events sent a message to countries around the world that there is no guarantee of compliance with any future arms control agreement made with the United States.

Key Takeaways for the UPSC Examination / Way Forward

- **Review of the Discriminatory Regime:** Instead of making the NPT merely a means of non-proliferation, emphasis should be placed on its core third pillar of universal disarmament.
- **Uniform Standards and Transparency:** There should be uniform and transparent rules of inspection and compliance for Israel, Iran, and all other regional powers.
- **Restoration of Diplomatic Commitment:** To revive multilateral frameworks like the JCPOA, the US and Western countries will have to prove their policy continuity and credibility.

Conclusion

The solution to the global nuclear crisis lies not in stopping Iran or any other country from enrichment, but in whether the existing international framework is just and rational or not. Imposing selective sanctions and indefinitely postponing the NPT's disarmament obligations does not build a "rules-based order."

As Einstein and Russell warned—if the world does not collectively move toward the complete elimination of nuclear weapons, this illusion of deterrence will one day turn into a global catastrophe. The choice is crystal clear: we must move toward disarmament through policy reforms, or face global catastrophe.

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Ques: Analyze the key limitations of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Has this regime succeeded in achieving its objectives under current global circumstances? **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

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Page 10 : GS II: Indian Polity and Governance

Recently, the Central Government announced that by July 1, 2027, the country's entire criminal justice system will be fully digitized through the Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS). Under this initiative, all data related to investigation and trial will be securely stored on the Central Government's cloud platform 'MeghRaj'.

Following the replacement of old colonial laws (IPC and CrPC) with new citizen-centric laws—Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)—this step is a significant turning point toward making the justice system more transparent, swift, and accessible.

Digitisation and efficiency in criminal justice system

The shift in approach to justice has contributed to making the criminal justice system more citizen-oriented

LETTER AND SPIRIT

C.B.P. Srivastava

Recently, the Centre has announced that India aims for full digital rollout of its criminal justice system from July 1, 2027 after which the procedures related to investigations and trials under the new criminal laws will be recorded digitally through the Interoperable Criminal Justice System. The efficiency of any criminal justice system largely depends on the procedural efficiency beginning from the registration of the first information report (FIR) to investigation, filing of chargesheet outlining specific charges levelled against the accused and presenting the evidence and witness testimonies gathered to substantiate them, trial and finally the disposal. In the

digital system the data is stored on the government's cloud platform, MeghRaj.

Understanding criminal justice system

The criminal justice system comprises the police, courts, prisons, forensics, and prosecution services, and aims at ensuring that individuals who suffer injury or loss at the hand of others can present their cases and seek justice.

Justice cannot be delivered unless the rights of the accused and the interests of the victim and the society are balanced. This has been the fundamental principle of the criminal justice system, particularly in common law countries that follow the adversarial system. These countries base their legal systems primarily on judicial precedents and uncodified case law rather than strict statutory codes. This principle also gives the accused a fair chance to present his case in accordance with the tenets of natural justice, that is,

the rule of fair hearing (*Audi alteram partem*). In other words, no person should be condemned unheard. The system seeks to ensure procedural fairness. On the other hand, the inquisitorial system is practised in civil law countries, where rules are codified into comprehensive written statutes rather than shaped by judicial precedent. Under this system, the judge plays an active role in investigating the facts and determining the outcome of the case on the basis of inquiry and investigation. Thus, the precision of decision depends largely on the skills and prudence of the judge concerned.

Changed attitude

The reforms in the criminal law have opened a new avenue for the delivery of justice. To be more appropriate, the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) have been replaced by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

(BNS) and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) with the idea of transformation. While the erstwhile penal code was implemented with an idea to punish the accused, the BNS believes in the delivery of justice through retribution. The new code has a democratic approach, placing greater emphasis on individual than on the state in matters relating to crimes. The criminal procedure code believed that trial of a 'criminal' was being conducted whereas the BNSS considers an accused as a citizen whose rights should be balanced with the interests of the victims without any prejudice. Thus, the shift in approach to justice has contributed to making the criminal justice system more democratic and citizen-oriented, while strengthening the protection of the principles of natural justice that are embedded constitutional framework of India.

Reforms in the system

It is well established that every system requires periodic reform to remain responsive to changing needs and circumstances. The judiciary plays a vital role in this process by guiding the state through its directions and rulings. Against this backdrop, it is important to note that courts have laid down procedures governing several aspects of the criminal justice system. Through their decisions, courts often seek to fill legislative gaps in

areas where the law is silent, thereby ensuring the effective administration of justice. For example, the Supreme Court in *Visakha v. State of Rajasthan (1997)* gave guidelines to prevent sexual harassment of women at workplace holding that such an act violates Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution.

The recent announcement by the Centre to enhance the efficiency of the criminal justice system through digitisation assumes considerable significance. In the field of forensics, the new criminal laws have made forensic examination of crime scenes mandatory for offences punishable with imprisonment of seven years or more. In view of this requirement, the number of forensic laboratories has increased from 129 in 2023 to 154 in 2025. However, according to the National Crime Records Bureau, only 46% of FIRs were digitally transmitted to courts. Since this accounts for less than half of all registered cases, it suggests that the digital chain of the criminal justice system remains incomplete.

Although most states have implemented various components of the criminal justice digitisation system, progress remains uneven. In this context, full digital rollout by 2027 will fill this gap and make the system more efficient.

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1. Basic Structure and Principles of the Criminal Justice System

- **Main Pillars of the System:** The criminal justice system primarily rests on 5 pillars—Police, Courts (Judiciary), Prisons, Forensics, and Prosecution Services.
- **Principle of Natural Justice (*Audi Alteram Partem*):** In India's Adversarial System based on Common Law, balancing the interests of both the accused and the victim is imperative. Its core rule is—"No person should be condemned unheard."
- **Adversarial vs. Inquisitorial System:**
 - **Adversarial System:** Based on judicial precedents, where the judge plays the role of a neutral arbiter.
 - **Inquisitorial System:** Adopted in civil law countries, where the judge themselves plays an active role in the investigation process.

2. Shift in Perspective in Criminal Laws (Colonial to Citizen-Centric Approach)

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- **Shift from Punitive to Justice-Centric:** The old IPC (1860) was primarily based on a colonial mindset aimed at punishing the accused, whereas BNS prioritizes the protection of citizen rights and justice (Retribution/Restorative Justice).
- **Respecting the Accused as a Citizen:** The old CrPC viewed the accused merely from the perspective of an 'offender', whereas the new BNSS considers them a citizen whose fundamental and legal rights must be balanced with the interests of the victim.
- **Strengthening Constitutional Values:** This ideological shift reinforces the principles of natural justice enshrined under the Indian Constitution.

3. Digitization, Forensics, and Current Challenges

- **Mandatory Use of Forensics:** Under the new laws, forensic investigation has been made mandatory for serious offenses punishable by 7 years or more of imprisonment. Under this, the number of forensic laboratories in the country was increased from 129 in 2023 to 154 in 2025.
- **Gaps in Digital Chain:** According to National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data, currently only 46% of FIRs are sent digitally to the courts. This indicates that more than half of the processes are still running physically/on paper.
- **Unequal Progress Across States:** Although various states have adopted components of digitization, their implementation and infrastructure remain highly uneven.

4. Role of the Judiciary in Reforms

- **Filling the Legislative Vacuum:** When the law is silent, the judiciary guides procedural reforms through its rulings and directives.
- **Example (Vishaka vs. State of Rajasthan, 1997):** The Supreme Court issued landmark guidelines to prevent sexual harassment of women at the workplace, ensuring the protection of Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution.

Conclusion

The Indian criminal justice system is transitioning from a punitive colonial model toward a democratic, technology-driven, and citizen-centric system. The full digital rollout (ICJS) by 2027 will enable seamless data flow among police, forensics, prosecution, and the judiciary.

However, to achieve this ambitious goal, it is critical to bridge the inter-state disparity in digital infrastructure, provide digital training to police personnel, and enhance the operational efficiency of forensic labs. Only then can procedural delays be eliminated to deliver swift, accessible, and fair justice to the common citizen.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: What does "Audi Alteram Partem" relate to?

- (a) Equality before the law
- (b) The principle of natural justice
- (c) Judicial review
- (d) Separation of powers

Ans:b)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Ques:How can the Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) ensure efficiency, transparency, and accountability within India's criminal justice system? Explain.(10 Marks, 150 Words)

Iran's disruptive strategy, its global consequences

Iran's recent actions over the Strait of Hormuz and its strategy of targeting its neighbours in the Gulf as retribution for the actions of the United States may seem to have been operational masterstrokes. However, in the long run, they may well prove to be strategic blunders that have antagonised the world at large and leave Iran out of the global mainstream and away from the path of sustained economic progress.

A strategy of disruption

For decades, Iran has overplayed its hand in presenting itself as standing up to what it has termed "continued Western imperialism" and in supporting the Palestinian cause through the lens of Islamic resistance – a policy that was not endorsed by most other developed and developing Islamic nations. As the Islamic regime in Iran grew in power, buoyed by its success in standing up to a powerful Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war that stretched through the 1980s, so too did its frustration at being unable to deliver telling blows against the "Big Satan-Little Satan" combination, as it referred to the U.S. and Israel, respectively.

Consequently, it engineered the second phase of its disruptive strategy in the late 1990s by developing and supporting proxies such as the Hezbollah, Hamas and Houthis, commonly known as the Axis of Resistance, and liberally endorsed their use of terrorism to cause widespread disruption in the region.

Here again, the Iranians have achieved much tactical success over the last two decades and kept West Asia on tenterhooks, but at a much larger level, it has widened the chasm that exists between itself and the rest of the world barring Russia, China and North Korea. It is this quartet which is shaping the trajectory of fundamentally disruptive resistance to the existing global order.

When you compare this with the orderly way



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Tehran needs to recognise the limits of its current geopolitical advantage

in which countries such as India are also challenging the existing global order with a call for greater multilateralism through dialogue and consensus, one can clearly figure out Iran's disruptive path.

Notwithstanding much assertion of civilisational and cultural linkages, India has maintained a steady transactional relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran, revolving principally around energy flow, trade corridors and the Chabahar port. Much in tune with its foreign policy of multilateralism in a multi-polar world, it managed to navigate the sanctions regime imposed on Iran by the West and maintained some energy flow based on national interest till it found alternate means and then gradually reduced its import of Iranian crude.

India's approach

India has only modest diplomatic leverage with Iran and rightly chose not to position itself as an interlocutor during the recent conflict, preferring instead to resort to quiet back-channel diplomacy and frequent calls for restraint. India co-sponsored the UN Security Council Resolution 2817 (2026), which officially condemned Iran's military attacks and aggressive actions against the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations and Jordan. Adopted on March 11, 2026, the resolution demanded that Iran immediately cease all attacks and threats, particularly those targeting international navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran has no doubt been emboldened by its ability to withstand months of the U.S.-Israel bombing campaign. It has come out of the conflict battered and embittered but still standing. With large portions of its military capacity still intact and a regime in power that seems to be now dominated by a combination of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

and hard line clerics, it appears that the region can expect continued acts of isolated belligerence that stay below the threshold of conflict. The frenzy of stage-managed grief and genuine hatred towards the U.S. and Israel that was on display on the streets of Tehran for the funeral of its slain leader, Ali Khamenei does not augur well for the future.

Iran's proposal to levy 'special rates' on friendly countries for transit through the Strait of Hormuz is another disruptive attempt at preventing any collective action from energy-hungry countries eager to benefit from this offer.

More recently, Iran's strikes on tankers following the Omani route through the Strait of Hormuz highlight its propensity to engage in coercive brinkmanship. Such an environment is highly unsettling for a large part of the world including India for obvious reasons – energy and trade corridors running through a volatile geopolitical arena.

The choice before Iran

It is time that collective pressure from countries other than the West starts building on Iran to desist from its varied coercive methods to keep the region on the edge. As the U.S.'s appetite to remain embroiled in the conflict waxes and wanes, and Israel strains to 'finish off the job it started', Iran needs to take a step back and not overplay the advantageous geopolitical hand it currently holds.

As a first step, it must look for windows to extract legitimate leverage accruing from the proposed de-freezing of its assets and widening energy flow from its embattled oil fields and refineries. Despite its isolation from the West, Iran is categorised as an upper-middle-income economy and has much potential for rapid growth, should it desire so for its people.

GS Paper II: International Relations

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Questions: "Stability in West Asia is essential for India's energy security, trade connectivity, and the interests of the Indian diaspora." Evaluate India's diplomatic strategy in light of this statement. (10Marks, 150 Words)

Context : Recently, the escalating conflict in West Asia, attacks on shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, and Iran's policy of targeting Gulf nations have raised serious questions regarding global energy security and regional stability. Analysts believe

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that Iran's 'Disruptive Strategy' may yield short-term tactical gains, but in the long run, it could prove to be a major strategic blunder that isolates it from the global mainstream and hinders its path to economic progress.

Key Points & Analysis

(A) Evolution of Iran's Disruptive Strategy

- **Historical Background:** For decades, Iran has presented itself as an opponent of "Western imperialism" and the vanguard of Islamic resistance. Its audacity grew further following the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s.
- **Proxy Network (Axis of Resistance):** Unable to directly defeat the United States ("the Great Satan") and Israel ("the Little Satan") in the late 1990s, Iran adopted a strategy of 'Asymmetric Warfare' by sponsoring non-state actors (Proxies) such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Houthis.
- **Short-Term Success vs. Long-Term Isolation:** Although these proxy groups maintained their presence in West Asia, it widened the distance between Iran and the global community.

(B) Global Order & The 'Quartet' of Global Resistance

- **Formation of the Quartet:** Iran is now aligning with Russia, China, and North Korea to challenge the existing rules-based global order.
- **Difference Between India's and Iran's Models:** While India advocates for global reforms through multilateralism, dialogue, and consensus, Iran relies on violent disruption and the use of force.

(C) India's Position & Strategy

- **Transactional Relations:** India-Iran relations have primarily been based on energy supply, trade corridors, and the development of the Chabahar Port. India prioritized its national interests despite Western sanctions.
- **UNSC Resolution 2817:** India co-sponsored UNSC Resolution 2817 passed in March 2026, which condemned Iranian attacks on Gulf countries and demanded the security of international shipping in the Strait of Hormuz.
- **Diplomatic Stance:** India has adopted a policy of back-channel diplomacy and restraint rather than acting as a mediator in this conflict, given its critical energy interests and vast diaspora residing in West Asia.

(D) Current Scenario & Risk Factors

- **Iran's Internal Landscape:** Following US-Israeli military operations and the passing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, the influence of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and hardliners within Iran has increased.
- **Pressure on Waterways:** Attacks on vessels transiting the Strait of Hormuz and Omani sea lanes, along with Iranian proposals to levy 'special rates,' have disrupted global supply chains.

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- **Era of Instability:** Iran's policy of coercive brinkmanship—operating just below the threshold of full war—continues to keep the entire region under constant tension.

(E) Way Forward for Iran

- **Strategic Restraint:** Iran must avoid overplaying its hand and actively seek opportunities for de-escalation.
- **Leveraging Economic Opportunities:** As an upper-middle-income economy, Iran possesses immense potential for economic growth if it focuses on unfreezing its frozen assets and restoring oil exports.
- **Global Pressure:** Non-Western nations (such as India and other developing countries) must also press Iran to respect regional peace and freedom of navigation.

Conclusion

While Iran's policy of disruption and provocation has sustained its role as a key player in regional politics, it has only deepened its global isolation. For nations like India that rely heavily on West Asian peace, secure trade routes, and energy security, stability in the region is imperative. Iran must realize that sustainable economic growth and the protection of its sovereignty cannot be achieved through disruptive warfare, but only by returning to the global mainstream and embracing responsible diplomacy.

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