

## The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

**Monday : 06 July, 2026**

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**Page 01: GS II : Governance and Social Justice / Preliminary Examination**

Recently, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) directed the social media giant 'Meta' to immediately block advertisements and content promoting Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) on its platform, Instagram. The government has sought a response from Meta within 7 days.

- This strict step has been taken following a media report (BBC Eye), which revealed that paid advertisements were running on Instagram, directing users to Telegram channels where this illegal material was being sold. This incident underscores a major challenge in balancing digital safety, technological accountability, and law enforcement in India.

## Meta told to disable 'child sex abuse' content

Instagram asked to provide explanation in seven days; 'action' to be decided after reviewing reply

IT Act, 2000, penalises obscene material; the IT Rules, 2021, enforce obligations on social media

Social media firms in breach may lose exemption under the law for third-party information or data

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has directed Meta, the parent body of several social media platforms, to disable advertisements and content promoting and facilitating access to child sexual exploitative and abuse material (CSEAM) on Instagram, according to government sources.

It has also sought an explanation on the issue. "The Ministry has ordered Instagram to disable such advertisements. The government has also demanded a detailed explanation on the action taken and other relevant information within seven days. A notice in this regard was

issued on Saturday," said a source.

It is learnt that the notice was sent following a directive from IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to senior Ministry officials. Further course of action will be decided after reviewing the reply, said the source.

### Policy and standards

The move came a day after the BBC Eye published its investigation revealing that Instagram had allegedly been running "paid adverts promoting child sexual abuse material in India" and that such advertisements linked users to channels on Telegram, where they could buy the material.

Meta's policy on advertisements, meanwhile,



The government has demanded a detailed explanation from the corporation on actions taken against the advertisements and other relevant information within seven days

Instagram is alleged to have shown paid advertisements with child sexual abuse material which directed users to Telegram channels where such content was reportedly on sale

Meta's advertisement policy prohibits content with sexually suggestive activities

The notice comes amid allegations that Meta's algorithm had been promoting videos with child sexual abuse material on its platforms



Meta is in a 'constant battle with criminals who hide among our 3.5 billion users and try to evade detection', a spokesperson said

test such advertisements, it was in a "constant battle with criminals who hide among 3.5 billion users and try to evade our detection".

According to Meta's policy, advertisements must "comply with the community standards on adult nudity and sexual activity. Ads must not contain imagery depicting nudity, sexual activity, depictions of people in explicit or sexually suggestive positions, or activities that are sexually suggestive".

### Rules and punishments

The policy sets additional restrictions beyond the Community Standard on Adult Nudity and Sexual Activity, says its sub-site.

According to a written reply by Mr. Vaishnaw to

the Lok Sabha last year, the IT Act, 2000 provides punishment for publishing or transmitting obscene material and material containing sexually explicit acts in electronic form.

The Act also provides for stringent punishment for publishing or transmitting material depicting children in sexually explicit acts in electronic form.

Besides, the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 enforces obligations on the intermediaries, including social media intermediaries, to observe due diligence.

If they fail to observe it, they lose the exemption under law for third-party information or data or communication links hosted by them. The intermedi-

aries are required to remove any such content within 24 hours.

The Ministry of Home Affairs operates the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal to receive complaints against cybercrimes, with special focus on cybercrimes against children.

It has also set up the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) for such crimes.

The government has, from time to time, blocked websites containing CSAM, based on lists from Interpol received through the Central Bureau of Investigation. It has issued an order to Internet Service Providers (ISPs), directing them to block access to such web pages or websites, said the reply.

## Core Analysis

### 1. Legal and Regulatory Framework

The following legal provisions exist in India to deal with such illegal activities:

- Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000:** Under this Act, publishing or transmitting obscene material or sexually explicit acts electronically is a punishable offense. The law provides for even more stringent punishments for such material involving children.
- IT Rules, 2021 (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code):** Under these rules, it is mandatory for social media platforms (intermediaries) to observe 'due diligence'. Upon receiving a complaint or coming to notice, such content must be removed within 24 hours.

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## Daily News Analysis

- **Risk of Losing 'Safe Harbor' Protection:** If a social media company fails to fulfill its responsibility under the IT Rules, it loses the 'Safe Harbor' protection (Section 79) granted under the law. This means that the company can be sued directly for illegal content posted by a third party on its platform.

### 2. Other Steps Taken by the Government

- **National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal:** Operated by the Ministry of Home Affairs, this portal specifically registers reports of cybercrimes against women and children.
- **I4C (Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre):** This center works to coordinate between various states and agencies to tackle cybercrimes.
- **Collaboration with Interpol:** The government, through the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), directs Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to block such websites based on lists received from Interpol.

### 3. Stance of Social Media Companies (Meta) and Challenges

- **Zero Tolerance Policy:** Meta claims that its policies have strict rules against child abuse material and they use AI and modern technology to prevent it.
- **Vast Number of Users:** According to Meta, identifying criminals and catching their constantly changing tactics (evading tech) within a massive network of over 3.5 billion users is a major technological challenge.

### 4. Key Concerns Related to this Issue

- **Failure in Ad Review:** The running of "paid ads" on platforms like Instagram indicates serious flaws in their advertisement review system, as criminals are able to promote illegal content by paying money.
- **Cross-Platform Syndicate:** Criminals use one platform (like Instagram) for advertising and shift the core illegal trade to another platform (like end-to-end encrypted Telegram), making it difficult for investigative agencies to track them.

### Way Forward

- **Development of Proactive Algorithms:** Instead of just waiting to receive complaints, social media companies must strengthen AI and machine learning so that such content or advertisements are blocked even before they are posted.
- **Strict Ad Verification:** The process of approving advertisements should be made more stringent, especially for ads associated with sensitive keywords or external links.
- **International and Inter-Agency Coordination:** Since the internet has no borders, there must be real-time sharing of data and intelligence among tech companies, national investigative agencies (like CBI, I4C), and international organizations (like Interpol).

## Daily News Analysis

- **Fixing Legal Accountability:** If companies repeatedly fail despite warnings, strict action like suspending their 'Safe Harbor' status should be taken so that they take their responsibility seriously.

### Conclusion

The proliferation of Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) is not only a violation of digital safety, but also a severe blow to human rights and the future of children. Child safety cannot be compromised in the name of freedom of expression and technological innovation. This warning issued by the government to Meta is a necessary step toward making digital platforms more accountable. In the future, to keep the digital space safe, the enforcement of strict laws, the ethical responsibility of tech companies, and prompt action by law enforcement agencies must go hand in hand.

### UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

**Question:** Consider the following statements regarding the Information Technology (IT) Rules, 2021:

1. Social media intermediaries are required to remove content such as Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSEAM) within 24 hours of receiving notification about it.
2. If an intermediary fails to observe due diligence, it may lose the 'Safe Harbour' protection available under Section 79 of the IT Act.
3. 'Safe Harbour' means that the intermediary cannot be held liable for third-party content under any circumstances.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Ans:** (a)

### UPSC Mains Practice Questions

**Question:** Striking a balance between the accountability of intermediaries on digital platforms and freedom of expression has become a major challenge for democratic governance. Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)



**Page 06:GS III : Science & Technology/ Preliminary Examination**

On July 3, 2026, ISRO successfully completed the first static ground test of the solid motor of its new sub-orbital test platform, SOLVE, at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. Gaganyaan is India's first manned space mission, aimed at safely sending Indian astronauts (Gagannauts) into Low Earth Orbit and bringing them back.

- The precision of the 'Recovery and Parachute System' is the most vital prerequisite for the safe return of the astronauts, and SOLVE has been developed as a dedicated test platform for the rigorous testing of this very system.

**Core Analysis**

**1. SOLVE Platform and Its Objective**

- Test Platform:** SOLVE is a sub-orbital rocket specifically designed for the integrated testing of the 'deceleration system' (speed-reducing system) and parachutes of the Gaganyaan's 'Crew Module' (the capsule where astronauts sit).
- Flight Profile:** During test flights, this rocket will carry the Crew Module to an altitude of 10 to 17 kilometers in the sky.
- Network of Parachutes:** Upon reaching the designated altitude, the Crew Module will separate from the rocket. Following this, a series of 10 parachutes will be deployed sequentially to controlledly slow down the module's speed before a safe landing (splashdown) in the sea.

**2. Technical Features and Modifications**

- Derived from PSLV:** The solid stage of SOLVE has been developed from the strap-on motor of ISRO's dependable rocket, 'PSLV'.
- Slow Burn-Rate Propellant:** To meet the specific requirements of the Gaganyaan test, a specialized solid fuel has been developed that burns slowly and in a controlled manner.
- Advanced Control System:** This motor is integrated with a straight nozzle alongside a 'Secondary Injection Thrust Vector Control' (SITVC) system, which will provide precise direction and stability to the rocket during flight.

**3. Strategic Importance of this Test**

- Simulation of Flight Conditions:** The development of SOLVE provides ISRO with the flexible capability to repeatedly simulate various adverse and emergency conditions on Earth that could arise during an actual space mission.

**ISRO conducts test of key component for Gaganyaan mission**

The solid motor-based platform SOLVE will be used for parachute tests of the crew module; it has been derived from the PSLV strap-on motor

The Hindu Bureau  
BENGALURU

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully carried out the first ground test of the solid motor-based Sub-Orbital Launch Vehicle for Experiments (SOLVE) at its Static Test Facility at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

The SOLVE solid motor is a key component for conducting Gaganyaan test missions and the first ground test was carried out on July 3.

The ISRO is developing a solid motor-based SOLVE as a test platform to carry out Integrated Parachute Tests for validation of deceleration system of Gaganyaan's crew module under various test conditions.

During these test missions, the crew module will be carried to an altitude of 10 km to 17 km and separated from the vehicle.

A series of 10 parachutes will be deployed to reduce the velocity of the crew module before splashdown in the sea.



The ground test of the SOLVE solid motor being conducted at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The solid stage of SOLVE is derived from the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) Strap-on Motor with a few modifications to meet the Gaganyaan test requirements, including development of slow burn rate propellant and straight nozzle with secondary injection thrust vector control.

The ISRO said that during the test motor performance parameters were as expected. "The development of the SOLVE vehicle provides flexibility in conducting Gaganyaan test missions simulating va-

rious conditions in the actual mission," the space agency said.

Over the past few months, the ISRO has carried out key tests related to the Gaganyaan mission, which include the second Integrated Air Drop Test (IADT-02) and a behavioural study Mission MITRA (Mapping of Interoperable Traits and Response Assessment) in Leh, during which the four Indian astronauts selected for the mission along with scientists, engineers and medical teams were subjected to a week-long study.

## Daily News Analysis

- **Solid Proof of Safety:** In a human spaceflight mission, the 'safety rate' matters more than the 'success rate'. This platform allows for repeated live testing of the Crew Module's safety systems at a lower cost, without expending the main rocket (LVM3).
- **Continuity of Recent Successes:** This milestone comes right after other critical tests recently conducted by ISRO—such as the 'Integrated Air Drop Test-02' (IADT-02) and 'Mission Mitra' (behavioral and psychological studies) conducted on astronauts in Leh, showcasing the rapid progress of the mission.

### Way Forward

- **Rigorous Sub-orbital Trials:** Following the successful ground test, ISRO should now conduct multiple sub-orbital test flights of the SOLVE platform with an actual Crew Module to ensure that the choreographed sequence of parachute deployments is 100% precise.
- **Preparation for Uncrewed Missions:** Since ISRO is planning 3 uncrewed Gaganyaan missions before the actual human mission, the data obtained from these tests will prove to be the backbone in making these upcoming flights flawless.
- **Strengthening Encryption and Telemetry:** The real-time data transfer and telemetry systems between the Crew Module and the ground station must be further reinforced during the tests.

### Conclusion

The successful ground test of the SOLVE solid motor is a landmark safety milestone for India's Gaganyaan program. Bringing astronauts safely back to Earth is just as critical as sending them into space, and this test proves that ISRO is fully capable of making complex systems completely secure through indigenous technologies. This self-reliance will not only make India the fourth nation in the world to independently launch humans into space, but will also propel India's credibility and technological prowess to new heights in the global space market.

### UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

**Question:** Which of the following is most critical for the safe return of the crew module in the Gaganyaan mission?

- (a) Cryogenic engine
- (b) Parachute-based deceleration system
- (c) Reusable launch vehicle
- (d) Ion propulsion system

**Ans:** b)

### UPSC Mains Practice Questions

**Question:** The development of India's space program is not merely a scientific achievement but also a symbol of strategic and economic strength. Examine this statement in the context of the Gaganyaan mission. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

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## Page 07 : GS III : Indian Economy – Agriculture and Environment / Preliminary Examination

According to a recent study published in the journal 'Scientific Reports', global warming and climate change have led to a sharp decline in livestock milk production in India, especially in the Trans-Gangetic plains of Northwest India and high milk-producing regions like Haryana.

- India is the world's largest milk producer, where around 80 million small and marginal dairy farmers depend on this sector for their livelihood. In such a scenario, this impact of climate change not only threatens the country's food and nutritional security but has also emerged as a major challenge for the rural economy.

### Core Analysis

#### 1. Major Causes of Decline in Milk Production (Climate Variables)

Upon studying the data of 1,148 villages in Haryana between 2004 and 2019, scientists arrived at the following conclusions:

- High Temperature and Humidity:** The most severe decline in milk production occurs during the months of July and August, when temperatures exceed **38°C** and humidity rises above **70%**.
- Heatwaves and Evapotranspiration:** During the months of May and June, extreme heatwaves (loo) and a per-unit increase in 'Potential Evapotranspiration' directly impact milk production.

#### 2. Physiological Impact on Livestock

Extreme heat causes the following changes in the bodily systems of livestock, which reduce milk production:

- Energy Diversion:** Milch animals are highly sensitive to heat stress. Instead of producing milk, they begin to spend their energy regulating their body temperature (such as panting and sweating), which reduces milk yield by **20% to 30%**.
- Stress Hormones:** Heat increases the levels of stress hormones like 'Cortisol' in the animal's body, which inhibits milk ejection from the udders. In severe cases, this also results in the death of livestock.

#### 3. Vulnerability Matrix Across Different Breeds

### Milk production in Gangetic plains has nosedived due to climate change

A new study has found that global warming acutely affects dairy production across the Global South, especially the high milk production tract of Haryana as lactating animals are more prone to heat stress; hence, they divert energy from milk production to regulate body temperature, resulting in a 20-30% decline in milk yield.

**THE GIST**

The study documented milk yield in three cow categories and found that high temperatures, in combination with high humidity during July and August, significantly reduced milk production.

It found that indigenous cattle were more tolerant to heat stress, and maintained homeostasis, with more advanced evaporative cooling compared to buffaloes.

The text concluded that indigenous breeds should be conserved as 'reservoirs of climate-resilient traits,' and policies must prioritise in-situ conservation and farmer-led breed improvement programmes.

**Adaptive strategies**

Critically, evapotranspiration in May and June was an important factor, as was the temperature-humidity index and heatwaves. Solar radiation, ambient temperature, and vapour pressure were part of the climate impact assessments. In light of the fact that agrarian livelihood is likely to be affected profoundly by global warming, "these results underscore potential evapotranspiration's role in shaping adaptive strategies for sustainable livestock production," the paper said.

Buffaloes, with their darker legs and bare skin are particularly vulnerable to absorb solar radiation. They also have fewer sweat glands than cattle—so, a unit increase in potential evapotranspiration (mm/day) reduces milk yield by around 1 litre per buffalo per day, the paper says.

Likewise, cross-bred cattle showed a significant decline in productivity during heatwaves too, but not indigenous cattle breeds such as Sahiwal and Haryana, perhaps because of their adaptation, such as loose skin, efficient sweating and lower metabolic heat production.

"The higher the temperature-humidity index, the greater is the impact on livestock physiology and productivity: they eat less, and the heat triggers homeostatic responses "in the form of panting, sweating and reduced activity," the paper said.

The stress hormones and raised cortisol levels "impair milk ejection and thereby causes a drop in milk yield and, in severe cases, livestock mortality," says the paper.

**Indigenous cattle**

Fodder also becomes a casualty of rising surface temperature, affecting the livestock production system: changes are triggered in the quantity, quality and seasonal availability of feed and fodder. The paper estimates that such stresses in India lead to a loss of 3.2 million tonnes of milk, which is worth \$2.65 crore in monetary losses that could rise to \$5 million tonnes by 2050.

Abhinav Gaurav, lead advisor for sustainable dairy at Environmental Defense Fund India, a Delhi-based non-profit, told *The Hindu* that heat stress has a significant impact on the milk productivity, health, and well-being of cattle and buffaloes.

"During the intense summer months, the lactating animals are more vulnerable to heat stress, given that animals divert energy from milk production to regulate body temperature, resulting in a 20-30% decline in milk yield."

Beyond the direct impact of climate change on animals' health, production and wellbeing, increasing temperatures and prolonged summers are also affecting the broader dairy production system, like reduced production and availability of fodder and feed, increasing water scarcity, raising instances of pest and disease attacks.

**Given that India is the largest milk producer and consumer of the world, these production losses will put the livelihoods and nutrition of millions at risk.**

Abhinav Gaurav, lead advisor at Environmental Defense Fund India

Given that India is the largest milk producer and consumer of the world, these production losses will put the livelihoods and nutrition of millions at risk.

The *Lancet* that estimates that climate change-induced temperature rise can reduce Indian milk production by 25% by 2085.

"Given that India is the largest milk producer and consumer of the world, these production losses will put the livelihoods and nutrition of millions at risk, especially the 80 million smallholder dairy farmers who contribute 85% of the total milk production," he said.

Haryana's farmers, interestingly, "were not only well aware of... technologies and practices but implemented them in the summer season provided wallowing ponds to buffaloes, agroforestry, keeping livestock in shed, alteration of microclimate via sprinklers, foggers, mist, etc., feeding management, and reduced the negative effects of the extremes [of] summer months," the paper, which was authored by researchers from the ICAR National Dairy Research Institute and other collaborating institutions, concluded.

**Traits to tolerate heat**

Indigenous cattle are more tolerant to heat stress, and maintain homeostasis

What is, they are better at regulating their internal environment, with more advanced evaporative cooling compared to buffaloes. Besides, "indigenous breeds show stronger immunity against local parasites and pathogens. This resilience indirectly supports climate tolerance, since heat stress often compromises immune functions," the authors wrote.

The National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources has identified heat tolerance traits in cattle, such as heat shock proteins, coat colour, and hair characteristics, said Dr. Gaurav.

And the research showed that the Sahiwal breed of cattle is significantly more heat-tolerant than exotic breeds with comparable milk productivity.

"The findings underscore the need for a strategic shift toward resilience-oriented livestock management. We recommend the integration of potential evapotranspiration and temperature-humidity index... into regional early warning systems to allow for proactive management," it added.

"Furthermore, long-term climate resilience should prioritise thermo-tolerant breeding programs that leverage local indic traits."

The text concluded that indigenous breeds should be conserved as "reservoirs of climate resilient traits," and policies must prioritise in-situ conservation and farmer-led breed improvement programmes.

"The larger challenge now lies in scaling these solutions for millions of smallholder farmers, who often face limited awareness, inadequate financial resources, and the absence of a coordinated national climate-smart dairy strategy," Dr. Gaurav said.

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The study found that the impact of climate change is not uniform across all livestock:

- **Buffaloes:** They are the most sensitive. Due to their dark color and lack of hair on the skin, they absorb more solar radiation. Additionally, they have fewer sweat glands compared to cattle. A per-unit increase in evapotranspiration reduces milk by approximately 1.4 liters per buffalo per day.
- **Cross-bred Cattle:** These cows, bred by crossing foreign breeds, also rapidly lose their productivity during heatwaves.
- **Indigenous Cattle (Sahiwal & Hariana):** These breeds are capable of tolerating extreme heat. Their loose skin, effective sweating mechanism, and lower metabolic heat make them climate-resilient. Furthermore, they possess better immunity to fight local parasites and diseases.

#### 4. Broader Impact on the Dairy Ecosystem

- **Scarcity of Fodder and Water:** Rising temperatures have adversely affected the quality, quantity, and seasonal availability of fodder. Alongside this, the water crisis has also deepened.
- **Outbreak of Pests and Diseases:** Increasing heat and humidity weaken the immune system of livestock, leading to a rise in infectious diseases and pest attacks.
- **Massive Economic Loss:** Currently, due to these environmental stresses, India is suffering an annual loss of 3.2 million tonnes of milk (valued at approximately ₹2,661 crore). According to The Lancet report, if this situation persists, Indian milk production could decline by up to **25%** by the year 2085, and this loss could reach 15 million tonnes by the 2050s.

#### Way Forward

- **Conservation and Promotion of Indigenous Breeds:** Indigenous breeds like 'Sahiwal' should be preserved as reservoirs of climate-resilient traits. At the policy level, farmer-led breed improvement programs should be prioritized.
- **Early Warning Systems:** The 'Temperature-Humidity Index' (THI) and evapotranspiration should be integrated into weather forecasts at the regional level, so that farmers can take protective measures for livestock before a heatwave arrives.
- **Scaling Up Adaptation Strategies:** Similar to the farmers of Haryana, other regions should also promote the construction of wallowing ponds, agroforestry, shed construction, the use of sprinklers/foggers, and heat-adjusted feed management.
- **Climate-Smart Dairy Strategy:** There is an urgent need for a coordinated national 'Climate-Smart Dairy Strategy' to deliver financial assistance, technical awareness, and resources to India's 85 million small and marginal farmers.

#### Conclusion

This study is clear evidence that climate change is no longer just a future threat, but a direct assault on our current rural economy and food security. To maintain India's leading role in global milk production and to safeguard the livelihoods of millions of small farmers, traditional dairy practices must transform. Only through the scientific utilization of indigenous livestock breeds and the integration of modern technologies (like foggers and early warning systems) can we make India's dairy sector climate-resilient and sustainable.

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**UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions**

**Question:** Which of the following measures is not part of Climate-Smart Dairy?

- (a) Use of foggers and sprinklers
- (b) Construction of sheds
- (c) Agroforestry
- (d) Regular use of excessive antibiotics

**Ans: d)**

**UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions**

**Question:** "Climate change is an emerging crisis for India's dairy sector." In light of this statement, analyze its impact on milk production. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

## Page 08 : GS II : International Relations / Preliminary Examination

In an era of global geopolitical instability and rising tensions among superpowers, bilateral relations between India and Japan have emerged as a strong pillar of stability in the Asia-Pacific region. Recently, the maiden official visit of Japan's newly elected Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and the 16th India-Japan Annual Summit (July 2026) have given a new direction to the 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership' between the two nations.

- The defining feature of this visit was that both countries sent a clear signal to completely 'ring-fence' (protect) their bilateral interests from the uncertainties of multilateral agreements.

### Core Geopolitical Context and Challenges

- **Uncertainty on Multilateral Fronts:** Due to the United States showing diminished enthusiasm toward the 'Quad' grouping and its indecisiveness regarding the "Indo-Pacific" terminology in its strategy, India and Japan have intensified focus on strengthening their bilateral ties.
- **The China Factor:** Aggressive Chinese military maneuvers in the South China Sea, East China Sea, and the Taiwan Strait have posed shared security challenges for both countries.
- **Impact of Global Conflicts:** The ongoing warfare involving the US-Israel and Iran has put maritime energy transit and the safety of mariners in the Gulf Region at risk, affecting the energy security of both major Asian economies.

### Main Highlights and Agreements of the Summit

- **'Updated' Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP):** Instead of relying on the US stance, both countries reiterated their commitment to join hands independently to maintain a rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Energy Resilience:** At least 16 agreements were signed to secure the 'Maritime Energy Transport Value Chain', ensuring an uninterrupted energy supply from South Asia to the Indo-Pacific.
- **Maritime Security Cooperation:** Both nations agreed on the construction of naval platforms, enhancing Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), and increasing surveillance.
- **Strategic Concerns:** The joint statement expressed "grave concern" over the situation in the South and East China Seas and called for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue.

### Two together

India and Japan did well to ring-fence their ties from multilateral accords

**J**apanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's first official visit to India turned out to be an occasion to signal enhanced bilateral coordination in the face of global uncertainties. Rapid changes in geopolitics and technological advances are forcing all countries into fresh thinking, most consequentially with regard to China. The U.S. appears less enthusiastic about the Quad grouping (with India, Japan and Australia) and is unsure of the nomenclature "Indo-Pacific" in its strategy. Against this backdrop, India and Japan declared a joint intent to continue with an 'updated' Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) posture, ring-fencing bilateral ties from multilateral arrangements. Ms. Takaichi signed at least 16 agreements and documents, including a joint statement on energy resilience to support bilateral cooperation along the 'maritime energy transport value chain'. The commitments to energy cooperation were supported by the awareness that to play lead roles in the FOIP, the two sides should cooperate in the energy domain from South Asia to the Indo-Pacific. This concern was also linked with the problems both sides faced regarding the safety of energy-carrying ships and sailors during the U.S.-Israel war against Iran. The two major Asian economies have a shared interest in ensuring that the nearest energy sources in the Gulf remain accessible. They have agreed to build naval platforms to enhance maritime domain awareness and surveillance.

A joint statement issued during the visit mentioned "serious concerns" about the prevailing situation in the South China and East China Seas, and Japanese officials spoke to the media frankly about the need to address the Taiwan issue peacefully. Though a planned visit to Guwahati was dropped, Ms. Takaichi underscored Japan's attention to the northeastern regions of India by connecting them with "relevant partners and regional organisations" of the Bay of Bengal region. BIMSTEC was mentioned as a partner organisation for Japan. Japan has major investments in Bangladesh and Thailand, and connecting these projects, including the Matarbari port in Cox's Bazar, through an 'industrial value chain' with India's northeast can boost regional prosperity and security. Ms. Takaichi has painted a vast canvas of cooperation stretching from India's neighbourhood to the Pacific Ocean to protect the India-Japan relationship from the uncertainties of the current world order, but both sides have to manage multiple other relations effectively to ensure optimal outcomes. They have to manage their relations with China and the U.S. in such a manner that their strategic interests are protected and conflicts avoided. It can be a path of mutual learning and cooperation for India and Japan as they seek to navigate the global turbulence.

### Strategic Engagement for India's North-East

- **Regional Connectivity:** Although the Japanese PM's visit to Guwahati was canceled, she placed special emphasis on connecting India's North-Eastern states with the regional countries of BIMSTEC.
- **Industrial Value Chain:** There is a plan to build an industrial value chain by linking Japanese investments in Bangladesh (such as the 'Matarbari Port' in Cox's Bazar) and projects in Thailand with India's North-Eastern states, which will boost both security and prosperity in this turbulent region.

### Recent Developments (Based on Press Analysis)

- **Joint Declaration on Economic Security:** Both countries have made economic security a new pillar of their partnership. Under this, a strategy has been formulated to free the supply chains of semiconductors, critical minerals, and pharmaceuticals from dependence on China.
- **'UNICORN' Pact in Defense Technology:** Under the co-development of defense technology, final technical consensus has been reached for the first time on the transfer of the naval radio antenna 'UNICORN' between India and Japan, which will boost naval Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) under 'Make in India'.
- **AI and Digital Partnership:** The two nations issued a joint cooperation statement on the development of Large Language Models (LLMs) and secure AI infrastructure.
- **Green Energy Initiative (CBG Initiative):** The 'India-Japan Cooperative Biogas Development Initiative' was launched to set up 1,000 biogas plants in India, alongside accelerating clean ammonia and green hydrogen projects in Odisha.
- **Progress on Bullet Train Project:** A commitment was made to induct Japan's state-of-the-art 'E10 Series Shinkansen' trains for the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail project and to operationalize its primary section by 2027.

### Way Forward

- **Balanced Foreign Policy:** Both India and Japan must protect their strategic interests by avoiding direct confrontation with China while balancing their relationships with the United States.
- **Correcting the Trade Imbalance:** The bilateral trade, which is currently heavily skewed in Japan's favor, must be made more balanced through a comprehensive review of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).
- **Timely Implementation of Projects:** Mega projects like the proposed industrial corridor between Northeast India and BIMSTEC countries, as well as the Bullet Train, must be freed from bureaucratic red tape and completed on schedule.

### Conclusion

This growing alignment between India and Japan is not merely a diplomatic formality, but a necessity of the changing global order. Amidst the uncertainties of multilateral forums, both nations have proven that their mutual trust is independent and robust. This vast framework of cooperation extending from the Gulf countries to the Pacific Ocean will not only determine

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Asia's security in the times to come, but will also pave the way for mutual learning and sustainable development for both nations in an era of global uncertainties.

**UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions**

**Ques:** What is the primary objective of the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)' initiative?

- (a) To promote a rules-based maritime order in the Indo-Pacific region
- (b) To implement a common currency in Asia
- (c) To increase the proliferation of nuclear weapons
- (d) To form only military alliances

**Ans: a)**

**UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions**

**Ques:** "Evaluate Japan's role in the development of India's North-Eastern states and in BIMSTEC regional connectivity. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

## Page 10 : GS III : Indian Economy - Agriculture / Preliminary Examination

India possesses a vast and historic marine fisheries sector, which forms the backbone of the livelihoods of millions of coastal families and the country's food security. Recently (February 2026), the Government of India, citing data from the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), claimed that **91.1%** of the country's commercial fish stocks are 'sustainable' and healthy.

- However, assessments by global organizations (such as the FAO) and ground realities point toward a severe crisis that contradicts this official optimism. This crisis is particularly linked to the ecological destruction of our inshore fishing grounds (territorial waters).

### Paradox Between Official Claims and Global Assessments

- Official Claim:** According to CMFRI, the majority of the assessed commercial fish stocks are in good condition, and India has remained insulated from the international crisis of 'overfishing'.
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Perspective:** According to the FAO, India's marine fish production has reached a plateau because most of the major stocks have been fully exploited. Unregulated access has led to an exponential increase in the number of medium and small trawlers, thereby depleting resources for poor traditional fishermen.
- Flaws in Data Methodology:** CMFRI primarily relies on fish landing data at the coasts to estimate fish availability rather than conducting direct scientific stock assessments in the sea, which is not entirely reliable.

### Degradation of the Inshore Ecosystem: The Real Crisis

## The real crisis in India's fisheries

Official claims that most of India's marine fish stocks are sustainable should not distract from the continuing degradation of the country's inshore fishing grounds. Stronger governance of coastal waters and better management of mechanised trawling are essential for truly sustainable fisheries.

### FULL CONTEXT

**Maarten Ravitsky**  
India has a very large and old marine fishing population. Every day, both small-scale and mechanised trawl fishers go out to earn a living and provide the nation with food.

The Government of India recently released its latest prognosis of the country's ocean fisheries (February 11, 2026). Its press release emphasised that Indian marine fisheries are largely sustainable, suggesting the country has avoided the bone of international fishing, namely overfishing.

**Official claims**  
Drawing on figures compiled by the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI), the government said that most commercial fish stocks "are in good health". Furthermore, it stated that "91.1% of the 135 fish stocks evaluated in different regions during 2022 were found sustainable". If this assessment is accurate, it would be good news. However, there are good reasons to doubt whether it is indeed correct.

For one, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is far more reserved in its assessment of the condition of Indian marine fisheries than the Indian government seems to be. India's country profile argues that "India's marine fisheries production reached a plateau as most major stocks are fully exploited [...] Unregulated access to these fisheries resulted in significant overcapacity, especially of medium and small trawlers that compete over dwindling fishery resources with mostly impoverished small-scale fishers." This message is not half as buoyant as the one published by the Indian government.

I will not dispute CMFRI's conclusions or its methodology for calculating 'sustainability'. After all, most of its procedures are well in vogue. What is known, however, is that compared with many other fishing nations, CMFRI continues to rely primarily on landing data rather than stock assessments.

In other words, it calculates the availability of fish stocks in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)—which includes up to 200 nautical miles (371 km) of sea area around the country—based on what fishermen catch. Even a layperson can understand that finding a certain number of shells on the beach does not necessarily predict the quantity of shells in the sea.

Other nations, therefore, make use of stock assessments at sea itself, thereby calculating how much aquatic life is available in certain waters. This is obviously the more reliable method to determine the health of fish stocks.

The Government of India cannot be blamed for not yet adopting this more costly form of stock assessment. But it does raise suspicions that the race to catch up with China, which is also infecting the fisheries sector, may also be inducing a hidden bias in the figures.

**The decline of inshore ecosystems**  
Among the fishers I have spoken to over thirty years along the Tamil Nadu coast, the consensus is that catches have consistently gone down and that many species that were formerly available have disappeared. The government, however, seems to continue on the path of amplifying fish production figures from one year to the next.



### THE GIST

Food and Agriculture Organization presents a more cautious assessment of India's marine fisheries than official claims, warning that many major fish stocks are already fully exploited.

India's fish stock estimates rely largely on landing data rather than direct stock assessments, raising questions about how sustainability is measured.

Expanding mechanised trawling and weak enforcement of coastal fishing regulations are placing increasing pressure on inshore ecosystems and small-scale fishers.

Overfishing, however, is not the central issue here. The more pressing concern is the decline, if not the destruction, of the inshore benthic environment. Over the past year, numerous fisheries scientists and policymakers have described the inshore fishing environment as "destroyed". What exactly do they mean? India is surrounded by a relatively narrow continental shelf, where fishing is always the most productive. This continental shelf is broadest in Gujarat and a part of Maharashtra, but remains quite narrow along the rest of the sub-continent.

Generally speaking, one can assume that the territorial sea—a legal category referring to waters that lie within 12 nautical miles (or 22 km) from shore—largely overlap with the continental shelf. These waters provide favourable ecological conditions for commercially valuable species such as shrimp to feed, breed and grow.

But why do senior experts conclude this is no longer the case?

This is a complex question with many answers. Thus, one can point to the construction of dams in major rivers, which disallow land-based nutrients from entering the sea. One can also point to the ongoing destruction of mangroves, where fish breed, and to pollution that is entering the sea from various industrial, agricultural, and urbanising sources. Many scientists, and fishers too, point to such changes to explain the decline of fisheries. These factors obviously affect the inshore fishing zone more than they do distant waters.

**Mechanised trawling and its cost**

One of the many factors contributing to this decline is the dramatic and largely uncontrolled expansion of mechanised trawling.

It is good to remind ourselves first of all that semi-industrial trawling is not an Indian fishing method. It was introduced from abroad around 1960 and has since

expanded to gigantic proportions.

According to the same government press release, India now has 64,444 mechanised fishing vessels. These numbers are growing day by day as there are practically no restrictions on new entries. Moreover, existing vessels are continuously being extended and fitted with more powerful Chinese engines, enabling them to catch even more fish.

This oversized fleet of mechanised trawlers ploughs the inshore seabed in a continuous fashion. In heavily trawled areas, this results in a decline of all animal and plant life. It has also resulted in major conflicts with the numerous population of small-scale fishers who see their livelihoods imperilled. The problem is that regulations to protect the inshore fishing zone are almost non-existent. Yet, mechanised boat fishing is closed for two months every year, so as to allow for the regeneration of fish stocks. But the main tool to prevent unwanted trawling—the prohibition for mechanised boat fishers to operate within a geographic zone of 5 NM—lacks forcefulness.

There are two main reasons for this. First, coastal states lack sufficient staff or craft to patrol the inshore waters. Second, governments have precluded fishers from playing a helpful role in management. The result is that the ecology of the inshore fishing zone is continuously being degraded, and all fishers—small-scale and mechanised—are being pushed out to the offshore and the deep-sea fishing zones.

**Rethinking fisheries policy**

The Indian government is optimistic about the potential of deep-sea fishing and is encouraging fishers to make a shift. But the question is whether that potential, which is also being tapped by other fishing nations, is as bountiful as expected. The FAO estimates that "at best, only a marginal increase can be realised through exploitation of deep-sea resources."

More fundamentally, India's current fisheries policy is wasting the enormous potential of inshore waters. For one thing, it imposes extra expenses for fuel and technology on fishers so that they can actually travel to more distant waters. At the same time, it is closing its eyes to the dire need for proper management of inshore waters. Aside from addressing the problems of marine pollution, it also means curbing, if not reducing, mechanised boat fishing. This is more than a technical issue. Mechanised boat fishers, by way of their numbers and their political influence, now often stand in the way of proper management. This is witnessed, for example, in the case of the Palk Bay, which is located between India and Sri Lanka. There, the Indian fleet of mechanised boat fishers now pirates Sri Lankan waters to the detriment of small-scale fishers on the other side of the international border. Ownership of the island Katchatheevu does not make any difference in this respect.

**The way forward**  
While the government's assessment paints an encouraging picture of Indian fish stocks, a more fundamental concern remains. The larger issue is that fishers, scientists and policymakers continue to deny the degradation of the inshore fishing grounds. A viable and truly sustainable fishery can only be realised if governance of the so productive inshore waters improves. For this, the government must adjust its perspective. This is in line with FAO's view that: "Strenuous efforts are needed at federal and state levels to upgrade the country's capacity to manage its marine fisheries." In this context, CMFRI might also want to devote effort to studying what the condition of the benthic environment is actually like. This would provide a basis for deliberating on the best way forward. (Maarten Ravitsky is emeritus professor of coastal resource governance, University of Amsterdam)

## Daily News Analysis

Although fish may be available in the deep sea (EEZ), the environment of India's 'inshore' or territorial waters (up to 12 nautical miles from the coast) is being severely degraded. Experts consider it "destroyed" due to the following factors:

- **Narrow Continental Shelf:** Except for Gujarat, India has a narrow continental shelf along most of its coastline. This very region is the most favorable habitat for the growth and breeding of fish, especially shrimp.
- **Land-Based Factors:** The construction of dams on rivers has blocked land-based nutrients from reaching the sea. Furthermore, the destruction of mangroves and rising marine pollution from industrial, agricultural, and urban waste are hitting the coastal areas the hardest.

### Unregulated Expansion of Mechanized Trawling

The biggest contributor to the devastation of the coastal environment is mechanized trawling:

- **Overcapacity:** Currently, India has approximately 64,414 mechanized fishing vessels. There is no effective restriction on the entry of new vessels, and their power is constantly being amplified through the use of Chinese engines.
- **Destruction of the Benthic Environment:** These large trawlers with heavy nets continuously scrape the coastal seabed, completely destroying marine vegetation and animal habitats.
- **Conflict with Traditional Fishermen:** This mechanization is threatening the livelihoods of millions of small and traditional fishermen, triggering severe socio-economic conflicts between the two groups.

### Gaps in Current Policies and Regulatory Frameworks

- **Weak Enforcement:** According to regulations, mechanized trawlers are prohibited from operating within 5 nautical miles (5 NM) of the coast. However, coastal states lack both adequate personnel and modern patrol boats to enforce this.
- **Lack of Fishermen Participation:** Local traditional fishermen have been entirely excluded from the coastal fisheries management and monitoring process.
- **Over-Reliance on the Deep-Sea:** The government is encouraging fishermen to venture into the deep sea, but according to the FAO, there is only marginal room for growth there. Moreover, this imposes an additional financial burden on fishermen due to fuel costs and expensive technology.
- **Geopolitical Disputes (Palk Bay):** Due to the excessive number of mechanized trawlers, Indian boats frequently cross the international maritime boundary line to poach in Sri Lankan waters. This harms local Sri Lankan traditional fishermen and strains India-Sri Lanka relations (the ownership of Katchatheevu Island does not resolve this underlying ground issue).

### Way Forward

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## Daily News Analysis

- **Perspective Shift:** Instead of merely focusing on boosting production statistics, the government should concentrate on better governance of coastal waters and the rejuvenation of the ecosystem.
- **Strict Control over Mechanized Trawling:** A cap should be placed on the registration of new trawlers, and strict compliance with the exclusive 5-nautical-mile inshore zone must be ensured.
- **Modernizing Scientific Research:** CMFRI should conduct scientific assessments of actual fish stocks and the condition of the seabed (benthic environment) rather than relying solely on landing data.
- **Co-Management Model:** Local fishermen communities must be made partners in management and policy-making to protect coastal areas and deter illegal trawling.
- **Curbing Marine Pollution:** Strict Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules must be enforced to manage industrial and urban waste flowing from land into the sea.

### Conclusion

The future of India's marine fisheries does not depend on how sustainable our statistics appear on paper, but on how quickly we can rescue our most productive coastal waters. As suggested by the FAO, stringent and prompt efforts are required to upgrade India's marine fisheries management capacity at both the central and state levels. If the inshore ecosystem is not freed from mechanized trawling and pollution in a timely manner, this crisis will not remain confined to a depletion of fish stocks but will push millions of the country's fishermen into a severe livelihood crisis.

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### UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

**Ques:** Which of the following would be most conducive to the sustainable development of India's marine fisheries sector?

- (a) Continuous increase in the number of mechanized trawlers
- (b) Scientific stock assessment and co-management
- (c) Abolishing coastal regulations
- (d) Promoting deep-sea fishing only

**Ans:** b)

### UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

**Ques:** "Merely increasing production is not sufficient for the sustainable management of India's marine fishery resources." Explain. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

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**Page : 08 : Editorial Analysis**

*The right to belong beyond official documentation*

**O**n June 24, 2026, a member of India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) released a startling statement. The Indian passport, the person said, is a "travel document" and not a "citizenship document". The assertion set off a minor storm. The reasonable question that followed from many was if the passport would not do it, what document would?

Posed this way, the MEA's statement and the questions it raises become something of a red herring. A passport can only be issued to a non-citizen in exceptional circumstances, where the Government of India is of the opinion that it is necessary to do so in "public interest". Surely, therefore, barring those cases where this power is exercised, a passport must be seen as conclusive proof of a person's citizenship.

No doubt, it might be open for the government to establish under law that a person obtained the document by concealing the true status of his or her citizenship. But that does not mean a passport can be dismissed as merely a travel document.

**Citizenship under scrutiny**

The MEA's statement takes on an ominous hint when set against the milieu in which it was made. It arrives in the middle of the Election Commission of India (ECI)'s Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in various States. It also comes in the wake of a pair of pronouncements by the Supreme Court of India, most recently on the validity of the SIR in Bihar and the ECI's power to scrutinise citizenship, and before that, on the Assam Accord, in which the Court had much to say on how it conceives republican ideas of citizenship. Moreover, since an amendment to the Citizenship Act in 2019 (made operational in 2024), rules of naturalisation have been rewritten along religious lines. Taken together, all these developments must prompt us to ask an elementary question: what does it mean to be a citizen of India, who belongs, and on what terms?

The Constitution's answers to these questions, even if some find them indecisive, were reached with some amount of care and caution. Part II to the document, comprising Articles 5 to 11, settled the citizenship of those caught amidst the tragedies of Partition. Article 11 reserved to Parliament a seemingly plenary power to legislate and "make any provision with respect to the acquisition and termination of citizenship and all other matters relating to citizenship".

On a plain and literal reading, it might seem like the Union legislature was accorded unlimited authority to determine what factors can govern citizenship. Indeed, much of the contemporary defence of religiously founded citizenship laws



**Subhrith Parthasarathy**  
Advocate practising in the Madras High Court

has rested on such an interpretation. But a careful construal of the Constituent Assembly debates, as Gautam Bhatia has shown, suggests that the framers did not treat citizenship as a matter on which Parliament could do as it pleased.

**The foundations of citizenship**

Consider, for example, an amendment moved to the draft provisions of the Constitution by P.S. Deshmukh. He sought to include an express stipulation "that every person who is a Hindu or a Sikh by religion and is not a citizen of any other State, wherever he resides shall be entitled to be a citizen of India". The effort was met with sharp resistance. Among those opposing the move was Jawaharlal Nehru, who rejected the amendment outright, finding it "absurd on the face of it".

Alladi Krishnaswami Ayyar provided the most forthright response to it. He argued that India was pledged to the principles of a secular state. Therefore, there was simply no question of making a distinction between one kind of person and another on any "racial or religious" ground. Ultimately, Deshmukh's proposal was defeated, and B.R. Ambedkar's neutral citizenship clause was affirmed.

Thus, freestanding as the words in Article 11 might be, they must be understood in the context of their wider framing. They have in them an implied limitation drawn from the Constitution's most cherished and foundational commitments to secularism, equality, and non-discrimination. Parliament can decide the modalities of citizenship, but it cannot make religion a condition for entry.

At its conception, India adopted the principle of *jus soli*, that is a form of citizenship predicated on residence and birth. The Citizenship Act, 1955, saw the principle as its primary governing creed. But over time, the legislature moved away from the theory. First, in 1985, Section 6A was introduced into the Act to give effect to the Assam Accord, suspending the conferment of citizenship based on the dates on which people of "Indian origin" had come into India. Second, in 2003, the statute was further amended to deny citizenship to persons born in India even when only one of the parents of such person was an "illegal migrant".

In upholding Section 6A, the Supreme Court in October 2024, appeared to fortify two principles. It effectively saw no implied limitation in Article 11 and instead viewed the grant of power to Parliament to be virtually unlimited. It also appeared to lend constitutional respectability to an idea first promulgated by it in *Sarbananda Sonowal vs Union Of India & Anr.* (2005), that migration into Assam constituted "external aggression" against the State.

This rationale carried into its judgment in *Association for Democratic Reforms vs Union of India*, delivered in May this year, where the Court upheld the SIR exercise in Bihar, holding that the ECI may enquire into a person's citizenship, for the "limited" purpose of deciding eligibility for the electoral roll. The Court described the distinction it drew as "principled", between an adjudication on citizenship and on the administrative satisfaction concerning the continuation of a person's name on the electoral roll. Where the ECI is not satisfied with a person's assertion of citizenship, it ought simply to refer the case to the "competent authority" under the Citizenship Act.

But we have been down this road before. In Assam, during an earlier revision, voters marked "doubtful" were despatched to foreigners' tribunals and consigned to an endless bureaucratic maze to establish their citizenship. Today, therefore, we have ourselves a machinery in which a person need not be declared as a foreigner to be stripped of their basic rights. Instead, they are placed in a vacuum, neither confirmed nor cleared, with their rights being held in indefinite suspension.

Against this backdrop the MEA's clarification appears menacing. Running through all these exercises to establish citizenship is a common thread over the burden of proof. Where a resident could once rely on the state to take their citizenship as given, the onus today has been quietly shifted onto them. Almost any document adduced is seen as inadequate evidence. The Aadhaar card, we are told, is proof only of residence; the voter ID, only of prior registration; and now the passport, only of a right to travel.

**The primacy of personhood**

Under the Constitution, many of our basic privileges are premised on personhood. Article 14 guarantees equality before the law to "any person", and Article 21 the right to life and personal liberty to all. Citizenship is built on this foundation. It allows one the freedoms guaranteed under Article 19, to speech and expression, to carry on any trade or business, and to assemble peacefully. And it is the status of citizenship that guarantees one the statutory right to vote, to choose one's lawmakers, and to decide how one ought to be governed. Therefore, to be cast out of the position is to forfeit what Hannah Arendt called the right to have rights.

In a constitutional order where personhood comes first, the rules that determine who qualifies as a citizen must rest on more than the accident of paperwork. They must be built on what the Constitution most cherishes, on the equal dignity of every person and the right of each to equal protection of the law.

Paperwork cannot outweigh personhood in a constitutional democracy's citizenship framework

**GS Paper II: Indian Polity**

**UPSC Mains Exam Practice Questions:** Analyze the current challenges associated with documentary proof of citizenship in India and suggest solutions. (10Marks, 150 Words)

**Context :** In June 2026, a statement by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) sparked a fresh debate regarding the documentary proof of citizenship in the country, stating that an Indian passport is merely a "travel document" and not a "document of citizenship." This discourse comes at a time when a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls is being carried out by the Election Commission across various states. Currently, the concept of citizenship, its legal process, and the authenticity of various official documents have become subjects of critical review before the Indian constitutional framework.

### Passport and Citizenship: The Legal Paradox

- **Limits of the MEA's Claim:** Although the Ministry considers it merely a travel document, under the 'Passports Act, 1967', a passport can only be issued to Indian citizens, except in extraordinary cases of 'public interest'. Therefore, it is natural to consider it as robust proof of citizenship.
- **The Logic of Exclusion:** The government certainly retains the right to investigate whether someone obtained a passport by providing false facts; however, the legal sovereignty of the passport cannot be dismissed in a general manner based on this ground.

### Changing Constitutional and Judicial Dimensions of Citizenship

Part II of the Indian Constitution (Articles 5 to 11) deals with citizenship. Currently, ideological shifts are being observed between the judiciary and the legislature regarding its implementation:

- **Article 11 and the Power of Parliament:** Article 11 empowers the Parliament to make laws regarding the acquisition and termination of citizenship. Presently, this power has been utilized to draw religious lines within citizenship amendment laws.
- **Original Ideals of the Constituent Assembly:** Historians and legal experts point out that Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Jawaharlal Nehru, and Alladi Krishnaswami Iyer strongly opposed proposals to grant citizenship based on religion or race (such as P.S. Deshmukh's amendment) during the partition, and instead adopted the principle of a 'secular citizenship'.
- **Recent Stance of the Court (2024–2026):**
  - **Assam Accord (October 2024):** Upholding the validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, the Supreme Court considered the legislative power of the Parliament to be virtually absolute.
  - **Bihar SIR Case (May 2026):** In the *Association for Democratic Reforms v. Union of India* case, the Supreme Court permitted the Election Commission of India (ECI) to conduct a "limited inquiry" into citizenship to ensure the purity of the electoral roll.

### The Crisis of a 'Documentary Vacuum'

According to the author, a peculiar crisis has emerged before citizens within the current administrative setup, where no official document is being accepted as the final proof of citizenship:

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- **Declining Legal Authenticity of Documents:**

- **Aadhaar Card:** It is considered merely a proof of residence.
- **Voter ID:** It is considered merely a proof of prior registration.
- **Passport:** It is now being regarded merely as a right to travel.
- **The Endless Process of 'Suspicion':** Similar to the 'D-Voter' (Doubtful Voter) crisis in Assam, under the current system, an individual's basic rights are being suspended indefinitely (by removing their name from the voter list) simply by placing them in a 'suspect' category, without directly declaring them a 'foreigner'.
- **Shifting of the 'Burden of Proof':** Instead of automatically accepting citizenship, the State has shifted the entire burden onto the citizen to prove their citizenship through paperwork.

### Citizenship and 'Personhood' (Human Dignity)

According to constitutional philosophy, citizenship is not merely a legal status, but the very foundation of rights:

- **Person vs. Citizen:** Article 14 (Equality) and Article 21 (Right to Life) of the Indian Constitution are available to every "person" in the country, whether they are a citizen or not.
- **The Right to Have Rights:** In the words of philosopher Hannah Arendt, citizenship is that fundamental status which gives an individual the freedom of expression, trade, and peaceful assembly under Article 19, along with the 'right to vote'. In the absence of citizenship, a person is deprived of these political rights and pushed to the margins of society.

### Way Forward

- **Documentary Clarity and Accessibility:** The government should issue clear and unified legal guidelines determining which document will be treated as the final and irrefutable proof of citizenship, thereby eliminating confusion among ordinary citizens.
- **Administrative Accountability and Human Rights:** The 'Principles of Natural Justice' must be strictly followed before any citizen's name is removed during the revision of electoral rolls by the Election Commission or any other bureaucratic apparatus.
- **Return to the Core Philosophy of the Constitution:** The determination of citizenship rules should not be based merely on administrative convenience or a 'web of paperwork', but on the principles of equal dignity and equal protection of the laws (Article 14).

### Conclusion

Citizenship is the soul of any democratic nation. If premier state-certified documents like the passport, Aadhaar, and Voter ID are deemed insufficient, it will create a 'crisis of trust' between the State and the citizen. In a developing nation like India,

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where a large segment of the population remains detached from formal paperwork, the conditions of citizenship cannot be left to a mere 'coincidence of documents'. A progressive constitutional framework is one that keeps 'individual dignity' paramount while making the rules of citizenship inclusive, transparent, and humane.

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