

The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

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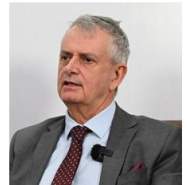
India and Canada are targeting the conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) by December 2026, coinciding with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned visit to Canada. Canadian High Commissioner Christopher Cooter highlighted that fast-tracked negotiations since March 2026 have yielded more progress than the previous 12 years of talks, aiming to boost bilateral trade and unlock up to \$1 trillion in potential investments.

Key Points & Deep Analysis

- **Fast-Track CEPA Negotiations:** Negotiations restarted in March 2026 under a accelerated 9-month timeline to finish before the December bilateral summit.
- **Investment vs. Trade Divergence:** While goods trade remains modest at ~\$8 billion USD, Canadian institutional investors (pension funds) hold ~\$80 billion USD (\$100–110 billion CAD) in India.
- **Direct Asset Focus:** Over 75% of Canadian institutional funds are locked in physical infrastructure assets in India, driving massive local job creation. Conversely, Indian firms employ ~100,000 workers in Canada.
- **Critical Minerals & Mining:** Canada possesses extensive reserves of titanium, potash (20% of global supply), and tungsten, which align with India's defense and industrial needs. However, Canadian mining footprint in India remains minimal due to regulatory barriers.
- **Energy Security Synergies:** Canada ranks among top global exporters of crude oil, LPG, and LNG, offering India long-term energy diversification.
- **Regulatory & Tax Hurdles:** Further expansion relies on India addressing complex taxation structures and easing mining/foreign investment regulations.

India-Canada trade deal by the end of the year, says envoy

Suhasini Haidar
T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI



Christopher Cooter

The India-Canada trade deal will be ready by the end of the year, Canadian High Commissioner Christopher Cooter has told *The Hindu*, adding that the two countries are planning for their increased engagement this year to culminate in a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the North American country in December.

Speaking at *The Hindu Mind* in New Delhi on Wednesday, Mr. Cooter said that the two countries had ample opportunities for bilateral investment which could scale up to \$1 trillion.

He did, however, point out that India could ease some tax and regulatory hurdles to spur further investment, something on which Canada has been engaging with the Union Finance Ministry.

"Previously, we discussed for 12 years, and we got no trade agreement," Mr. Cooter said. "This time, we started in March 2026. We have probably done more in these six months than we did in those 12 years." "I am pretty confident the trade deal will be agreed to by the end of the year," he said. "Our hope is we get there by the time of a Modi visit to Canada, which would mean achieving this in about nine months [since March]," the Canadian High Commissioner said.

Big investments

Mr. Cooter acknowledged that while trade is currently small (about US\$8 billion), the investment relationship between the two countries is a strong one, with a large space to grow.

"So, you actually provide good employment for 1,00,000 Canadians in Canada through Indian investment in Canada," Mr. Cooter said. "The other part of the story is that, while trade itself is rather small, the pension funds and other big institutional investors have about \$100-110 billion Canadian dollars or \$80 billion U.S. dollars in investment in India."

"...the difference with Canadian investment is that our investment

through these institutional investors is also direct investment". "We estimate that no less than 75% of all our investment through those funds is in physical assets. And no other country has that," he added. "So, those create not just tens of thousands, those create hundreds of thousands of jobs."

Bigger potential

Looking ahead, Mr. Cooter noted that most of Canada's mining assets were abroad, but "virtually none" of them were in India. "If you were to deregulate, I am pretty certain our hundreds of Canadian mining companies would come in here, start exploring, start mining, helping with processing, technology, etc," he said. "That's an example where we might invest in your country."

"And you might invest in, let's say, a tungsten mine in Canada because tungsten is useful for your defence industry," Mr. Cooter added. "We've got the things that you actually need, like energy. We're the fourth largest in oil, fifth largest in LPG, and fifth largest in LNG. We have 20% of the world's potash and number 2 or 3 in titanium."

He emphasised that Canadian funds and companies were eager to invest more and there were some issues India could address to enable that. "There are some tax issues," Mr. Cooter said. "...That's a discussion we are having now with the Finance Ministry in particular. There are things that slow the investment a little bit. You could take some more steps to deregulate. That would actually make the environment for Canadian investment even better."

EDITORIAL
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Static & Syllabus Dimensions (UPSC Relevance)

- **GS Paper II (Bilateral Relations & Policies):** Bilateral agreements impacting India's interests; institutional framework of trade pacts (CEPA vs. FTA).
- **GS Paper III (Economy & Infrastructure):** Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflows, capital asset creation, domestic mining sector deregulation (MMDR Act), and energy security.
- **International Trade Statics:** Difference between trade in goods vs. long-term institutional equity investments (pension fund FDI).

Conclusion

The proposed India-Canada CEPA signals a strategic pivot from traditional tariff-centric trade toward deep asset-backed economic integration. Easing domestic regulatory and taxation bottlenecks will be vital for India to secure critical minerals, fulfill long-term energy demands, and convert the \$1 trillion bilateral investment vision into reality.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: Consider the following statements regarding a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):

1. A CEPA generally covers trade in goods as well as services and investment-related issues.
2. A CEPA is necessarily limited to the reduction of customs duties on merchandise trade.
3. Rules relating to intellectual property, competition and movement of professionals may form part of a CEPA.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Ans:A)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "India–Canada economic relations have the potential to move beyond conventional trade towards investment- and resource-based strategic partnership." Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

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The 18th BRICS Summit, taking place under India's chairship on September 12–13, 2026, at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, brings together key global leaders against a backdrop of escalating regional conflicts and economic disruption. Centered on the official theme *"Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability,"* the summit provides a strategic platform for emerging economies to address supply chain shocks in energy and agriculture caused by ongoing geopolitical conflicts.

Key Points & Deep Analysis

• High-Stakes Bilateral Engagements:

Russian President Vladimir Putin's arrival opens space for bilateral talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi focused on bilateral defense and energy cooperation. Prime Minister Modi is also scheduled to hold key engagements with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

• Geopolitical Conflict Resolution:

Ongoing hostilities in West Asia and Ukraine take center stage, especially with the presence of Iranian President Pezeshkian and representatives from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states like the UAE and Bahrain.

• Supply Chain & Economic Security:

Deliberations target agricultural security, critical mineral supply networks, energy trade, and mitigation of maritime security risks in key transit zones like the Strait of Hormuz.

- **Financial & Trade Architecture:** Discussions emphasize boosting intra-BRICS trade using local currencies and exploring cross-border digital payment interoperability.

Wars, global crises may top agenda of BRICS summit

Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping, UN Secretary-General Guterres are among top leaders set to attend the summit scheduled for this weekend; Putin is likely to hold bilateral meeting with Modi today

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to arrive here on Friday morning to attend the 18th BRICS summit that will be held here this weekend, Russian sources said.

Mr. Putin is likely to hold a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi hours after his arrival, where the two sides are expected to discuss defence and other related matters. Mr. Putin is among the top leaders of BRICS members and partner countries who are scheduled to arrive for the September 12-13 summit.

Several heads of multi-lateral organisations, including United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, are also scheduled to attend the BRICS summit.

The External Affairs Ministry has confirmed that, apart from Mr. Putin, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto are among the top leaders who are expected to reach Delhi for the summit that is being held against the backdrop



Centre of attention: Flags of various countries on display as preparations for the 18th BRICS summit are under way at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi on Thursday. PTI

of a global crisis in the supply chains of energy and agriculture because of wars in West Asia and Ukraine.

The conflict in West Asia that started in February, when Israel and the U.S. launched a joint attack on Iran, is likely to be among the top topics of the summit, especially as Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian is scheduled to be here. This will be the first visit to India by Mr. Pezeshkian since he took charge after the death of President

Ebrahim Raisi in 2024.

Mr. Pezeshkian met Mr. Modi on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, on August 31. That was the first meeting between the two leaders since the war began.

The differences between Iran and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) will be keenly watched as the two sides have been exchanging tough messages because of the ongoing hostilities in the region.

The UAE will be represented by Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Sheikh Khalid bin Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ministry informed. The Gulf Cooperation Council, which is also in focus because of the hostilities in the Persian Gulf region, will be represented by Abdullah bin Rashid Al Zayani, Foreign Minister of Bahrain. Among the founding members of BRICS, South Africa will be represented by Cyril Ramaphosa and Brazil will be represented by Mauro Vieira.

Daily News Analysis

- **Multilateral Alignment:** Participation of leaders like UN Secretary-General António Guterres underscores the bloc's efforts to push for global governance reforms.

Static & Syllabus Dimensions (UPSC Relevance)

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** BRICS institutional evolution (from BRIC in 2006 to BRICS-11 plus partner countries); reforming global multilateral institutions (UN, IMF, World Bank); strategic autonomy in Indian foreign policy.
- **GS Paper III (Economy & Security):** De-dollarization and local currency trade mechanisms; resilience of global supply chains for food and energy; maritime security in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- **Static Concept:** Differing structures of economic groupings — Free Trade Areas (FTAs) vs. Loose Consultative/Economic Coalitions (like BRICS).

Conclusion

The 18th BRICS Summit highlights India's balancing act in managing complex bilateral dynamics—such as India-China border stability and Iran-UAE tensions—while steering the expanded bloc toward actionable solutions for energy, food security, and global economic stability.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: With reference to BRICS, consider the following statements:

1. BRICS was originally formed as BRIC before South Africa joined the grouping.
2. BRICS is a formal free trade area among its members.
3. The grouping seeks greater representation of emerging and developing economies in global governance institutions.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 3 only
- B. 1 and 2 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Ans: A)

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UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: "BRICS has evolved from an economic grouping of emerging economies into an important platform for reshaping global governance." Discuss..(10 Marks, 150 Words)



The article highlights the hyperactive "protein-pushing" ecosystem on social media—ranging from protein-fortified coffee ("profee") to excessive protein shakes—and contrasts it with scientific dietary principles. Based on the Physicians Association for Nutrition, India (PAN-India) White Paper and expert inputs, it shifts the focus from mindless protein consumption toward a balanced, individual-centric, and whole-food-based diet.

Protein: reel, reality and what constitutes a wholesome meal

From recommending adding fish and chicken into the diet, to protein shakes, and lately a 'Profee' (protein and coffee), the online space has become a hyperactive protein-pushing zone; experts and doctors stress the need to seek medical guidance and make wholesome food choices without falling prey to trends

Ramya Kannan

In the past, a 'healthy plate' was the single prominent determinant of what constitutes healthy eating. Things, however, are far more complex today, as awareness grows about each meal, micro meals, snacks and what must comprise each such unit.

Even as, on one side, awareness about packaging and labels on packaged foods grows with the new FSSAI (Food Safety and Standards Authority of India) mandates, on the dark side, online/social media continue to influence food fads and generalised opinion gets packaged as expert advice. The flavour of a few seasons now, seems to be protein.

India is asking the wrong question about protein, the Physicians Association for Nutrition, India (PAN-India) said in a White Paper, issued in the context of the National Nutrition Week between September 1 and 7.

"Protein has become one of the most talked-about and most misunderstood topics in nutrition. Conversations are dominated by grams, 'complete vs incomplete' labels, and high-protein product marketing. These measures are useful, but none of them alone tells you whether someone's diet is actually healthy or adequate," the paper says.

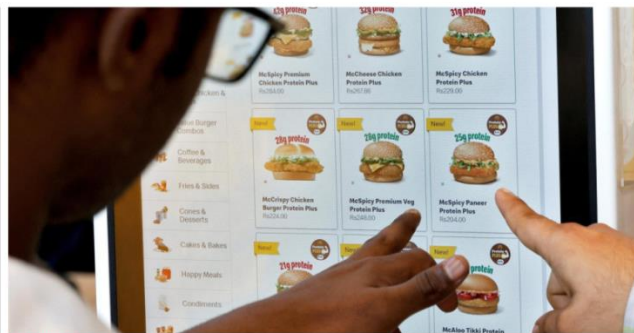
The treatise starts by contesting a basic principle: The conventional idea that animal protein is "complete" and plant protein is "incomplete" is oversimplification. Plant foods too contain all the essential amino acids the body needs; the amounts of each just vary by food. Within a varied diet with enough calories, the body gets what it needs across the day; you do not need to combine specific foods at every single meal, the nutritionists argue.

Push for protein

At the heart of the concern is excessive influence wielded on social media that pushes the protein narrative and sits in judgment over those not calibrating their protein per meal or per day. From recommending adding fish and chicken, to protein shakes and even, lately a "Profee" (protein and coffee) the online space has become a hyperactive protein-pushing zone. Algorithms aggressively push recommendations and create fresh anxiety over whether one is getting enough protein or not.

Meenakshi Bajaj, dietician, Tamil Nadu Government Multi Speciality Hospital, says: "Unfortunately, social media content is available anytime and everywhere, just a swipe away. As a result, it often appears to have more influence than qualified professionals or evidence-based medicine. It is unfortunate that patients, regardless of age or education, can fall prey to food fads. Content shared by influencers, gym trainers, people with large followings, and unqualified health enthusiasts are being followed without checking the source, credentials, or scientific basis."

She adds: "Just yesterday, I met a qualified professional undergoing dialysis



Behind the fad: People looking at burgers with extra protein options at a restaurant in Bengaluru. Protein has become one of the most talked-about and most misunderstood topics in nutrition. REUTERS

on dialysis require high protein. While that is correct, the post did not explain appropriate protein sources. He was consuming three to four whole eggs daily, along with 17 to 20 almonds and walnuts, which contributed to very high potassium and phosphorus levels that could be life-threatening. Had he consulted a qualified dietician, she would have explained suitable food sources and cooking methods to control potassium and phosphorus while still meeting his protein needs."

Another reason why protein has occupied centre stage is the growing use of GLP-1 antagonists, used widely for weight loss. Those on these drugs, are advised to watch muscle loss, a side effect of the process of losing weight. Protein is also said to assist with satiety in managing hunger. During any rapid weight loss process, protein may be burned for energy instead of serving the traditional function of tissue maintenance and repair.

The White Paper—Rethinking Protein in Plant-Based Diets—argues that protein should be understood within the context of a person's complete diet rather than reduced to grams, amino-acid scores or marketing claims.

As per the Indian Council for Medical Research - National Institute of Nutrition recommendations, a healthy Indian adult must have approximately 0.83 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight daily, making it about 50 grams of protein for a 60-kg adult. This is the generalised norm, however, children in their growth phase, breastfeeding women, sportspersons and older adults might require more protein, the quantity going up to 2 grams per kg per day.

Chemical-based health and fitness coach Priyadarshini Bajaj says, "I wouldn't call consuming protein itself a fad, but yes, there is a great deal of hype around protein right now. You don't need to have

A healthy Indian adult must have approximately 0.83 grams of protein per kilogram of body weight daily, according to ICMR recommendations

everything that you find in the aisle of a supermarket. However, for our population, a meal is extremely carbohydrate dominant. Just rice, chapati, idlis, dosas."

For clients, her advice is to add a small amount of protein to each meal, as also fibre. But what kind of protein? "Breakfast can be as simple as besan or oats, or if you're having dosa, just add a little paneer or tofu to it, if you are a vegetarian. Similarly, for lunch, add the same, or fish or chicken. The meal doesn't have to be protein dominant but yes, there should be a little protein along with your carbs and fibre; fats, anyway, we get enough of in our traditional diets."

Plant vs animal proteins

The paper pitches a similar angle: "In a varied diet with adequate calories, people generally do not need to combine specific proteins at every meal. Traditional combinations such as rice and dal, roti and chana, or idli and sambar are useful, but the more important issue is eating sufficient quantities of protein-rich foods," also challenges the familiar claim that animal proteins are "complete" while plant proteins are "incomplete".

Almost all plant foods contain all nine essential amino acids; there is a difference of course, and it lies in their relative proportions. It goes on to recommend prioritising pulses, beans, lentils, soy foods, nuts, seeds and whole grains, as they provide protein along with good fibre, unsaturated fats, vitamins, minerals and beneficial plant compounds.

PAN-India also addresses another

While arguing that protein supplements are not routinely necessary for healthy adults, they might have a role to play in helping athletes, older people with poor appetite, individuals on GLP-1 medications, or those recovering from illness. Ms. Priyadarshini agrees. "As far as supplements, I might recommend them to people who do are reluctant to bring any protein in their diet, especially vegetarians who have just a carb-loaded diet. Otherwise, I think as long as you're able to fit in whole foods into your diet, you will be good. That is the best way."

Her vote is for raising awareness of protein consumption and making wholesome food choices.

Dr. Bajaj says: "A diversified, wholesome diet especially one with a high dietary diversity score, age-appropriate portion sizes, and foods that are local, traditional, and seasonal rather than packaged or processed would be considered as an ideal prescription for good health." She explains that the core principles of nutrition prescription are adequacy, individualisation, and avoiding excess. "Therefore, a therapeutic nutrition plan should be guided by ABCDE: anthropometric measures, biochemical parameters, clinical signs and symptoms, dietary assessment, and exercise type, frequency, and intensity. It must also account for age, gender, medical and surgical history, drug-nutrient interactions, food allergies or intolerances, and economic status," she adds. Food, ergo, is a complex business, best not left in the hands of social media influence.

"Protein should not be viewed only as a number on a food label. It is an essential macronutrient that supports growth, development, digestion, immunity, healing, and muscle protein synthesis, especially when combined with resistance training," Dr. Bajaj notes.

THE GIST

The White Paper—Rethinking Protein in Plant-Based Diets—argues that protein should be understood within the context of a person's complete diet rather than reduced to grams, amino-acid scores or marketing claims

The paper says, "In a varied diet with adequate calories, people generally do not need to combine specific proteins at every meal. Traditional combinations such as rice and dal, roti and chana, or idli and sambar are useful, but the more important issue is eating sufficient quantities of protein-rich foods."

A diversified, wholesome diet especially one with a high dietary diversity score, age-appropriate portion sizes, and foods that are local, traditional, and seasonal rather than packaged or processed would be considered as an ideal prescription for good health, say doctors

Key Points & Deep Analysis

- **Social Media vs. Clinical Guidance:** Social media algorithms push generalized, extreme protein trends that ignore personal health conditions. Overconsuming targeted nutrients without clinical assessment (e.g., high-protein, high-phosphorus foods in dialysis patients) can be life-threatening.
- **Deconstructing the "Complete vs. Incomplete" Myth:** The narrative that animal protein is "complete" and plant protein is "incomplete" is an oversimplification. Plant foods contain all essential amino acids; a varied, calorie-adequate plant-based diet provides complete amino acid profiles over the course of a day without needing specific combinations at every single meal.
- **The GLP-1 & Weight Loss Factor:** Increased reliance on GLP-1 receptor agonist weight-loss medications drives high protein intake to preserve lean muscle mass and manage satiety. However, unmonitored intake during rapid weight loss risks burning protein for fuel rather than tissue repair.
- **Carbohydrate Dominant Indian Diets:** While protein fads exist, the typical Indian plate (rice, roti, dosa) remains overwhelmingly carbohydrate-heavy. Recommended intervention involves adding small, whole-food protein sources (paneer, tofu, pulses, eggs, fish, chicken) to every meal along with dietary fiber, rather than relying on commercial processed products.
- **Supplements vs. Whole Foods:** Protein powders and fortified ultra-processed foods are generally unnecessary for healthy adults and should be reserved for high-need categories (athletes, elderly with poor appetite, patients recovering from illness). Whole, local, and seasonal foods remain the gold standard.

Static & Syllabus Dimensions (UPSC Relevance)

- **GS Paper II (Public Health & Governance):** Public health issues related to malnutrition and non-communicable diseases (NCDs); FSSAI regulations on food labeling, claims, and dietary supplements.
- **GS Paper III (Science & Technology / Health):** Human nutrition and macronutrients; biochemical role of essential amino acids; impact of food processing and ultra-processed food consumption.
- **Static Nutritional Standards (ICMR-NIN 2020 Guidelines):**
 - **Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA):** Baseline daily intake for a healthy Indian adult is **0.83 grams per kilogram of body weight** (~50 grams/day for a 60-kg adult).

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Daily News Analysis

- **Higher-Need Groups:** Needs scale up to **1.5–2.0 grams/kg/day** for growing children, pregnant/lactating women, elderly populations (preventing sarcopenia), and endurance/strength athletes.
- **ABCDE Clinical Assessment Framework:** Anthropometric, Biochemical, Clinical, Dietary, and Exercise parameters used by clinical nutritionists for personalized meal planning.

Conclusion

Nutrition cannot be reduced to simple metrics on a package label or viral online fads. Reclaiming a "wholesome meal" requires moving away from single-nutrient obsessions toward individual-centric, whole-food diets rooted in regional and seasonal diversity—supported by professional medical guidance rather than commercial trends.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: With reference to proteins in human nutrition, consider the following statements:

1. Proteins are made up of amino acids.
2. Essential amino acids cannot be synthesised adequately by the human body and therefore need to be obtained through diet.
3. Every plant-based food contains all essential amino acids in equal proportions.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Ans: A)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "The growing influence of social media on dietary choices has transformed nutrition from a scientific issue into a consumer trend." Discuss the challenges posed by protein-centric dietary trends in India.. **(10 Marks, 150 Words)**

The debate over generative AI in primary education balances technological integration against pedagogical foundation. Triggered by New York City's 2026–27 moratorium on student-facing generative AI through Class 8, educators Lavina Jaswani and Deepa Jacob evaluate whether early childhood education demands a total ban, strict regulation, or balanced guided adoption.

Should the use of Gen AI be banned among younger students in schools?



Lavina Jaswani
Founder of the Sprouts International School in Jaipur

PARLEY

Recently, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani announced a one-year moratorium on most generative AI tools for public school students until Class 8 for the 2026–27 academic year. Officials argued that young children require human connection and independent problem-solving skills instead of relying on algorithms. India's policies on this issue are still evolving. So, should the use of Gen AI be banned among younger students in schools? Lavina Jaswani and Deepa Jacob discuss this question in a conversation moderated by Priscilla Jebaraj.

What kind of AI tools do you use and how do they benefit primary school children?

Lavina Jaswani: We have been using a number of AI-enabled tools to explain concepts to children; to offer personalised learning; and to help teachers create resources, from stories and worksheets to different types of assessments and quizzes. There are different apps we use, such as Kahoot! and Quizlets, to offer a gamified, interactive, and sensorial learning experience that keeps children engaged, rather than the traditional rote learning method.

However, the teacher still has to ask herself: what is my learning objective? What does a child need to understand? Where can the technology add value and is it truly beneficial and essential for the child? Keeping such questions in mind, AI tools can be effectively used in the classroom.

Deepa Jacob: In our school, technology is integrated seamlessly into our teaching and learning experience. Every child from kindergarten onwards has access to an iPad, which is kept at the school; they don't take them home. They have apps that might be able to assist them with learning such as Seesaw, which is a journal of their learning through which they can keep a record of things that they do, like published writing pieces, videos of science experiments, their reflection on their learning etc. You can even assign tasks on them.

Very recently, I discovered that Seesaw itself has an AI component. So, for example, we do a lot of work with reading fluency. The kids are given a grade-level passage. They do a cold read of it on day one and through the week they reread the passage along with the teacher, and learn to pronounce the words, the meaning of the words, and then finally on day five they record their reading again and they find that they've improved in their fluency and their accuracy. Recently, one of my colleagues found out that the recording feature has an AI component which transcribes what you've said and scores you based on your accuracy. This is really great because rather than the teacher having to listen to every child read, if an app can score your reading and tell you which words you



New frontier: India's first AI teacher 'Iris' interacts with students at a school, in Attingal, in Thiruvananthapuram, in 2024. PTI

are reading incorrectly, then you can practise those words alone. But it's AI, not a person, so it comes with its own flaws. For example, one of my students was reading a word with an Indian accent, and the app marked it wrong. The same thing happened to students using several other Asian accents. So, that's where I feel the human component is important. We need to be careful that we don't let AI take over our lives.

I also do not allow generative AI in my classroom. When I ask my children a question, or if they have a question, I will never ask them to Google it. Because the easiest way to kill a love for learning is to find a ready-made answer.

Educationists and philosophers in the field of education have talked about existing in the liminal space, which is that space where you struggle with a concept, that threshold between not knowing something and struggling with something and then finally learning it. I think that is a beautiful space to be in mentally and we need these as human beings. We need this time and space to reconfigure ourselves; time for ideas to incubate and grow. Relying on technology in that phase would be terrible. While technology should be used as a tool, it is easy to over-rely on technology and use it as a crutch. If you want to create human beings that make their own contribution in the world, I think there should be serious restrictions on the amount of AI used among kids.

One fear is that AI could harm a student's ability to think and learn for themselves – for instance, if they just enter their homework as a ChatGPT prompt, the AI does their homework for them. Is this a valid fear?

LJ: Yes, this is where we need to take a balanced position. AI can affect children's thinking abilities, but it depends on how we use it. There are two possibilities: one is when the child uses the AI, the AI gives the answer, the child copies it, submits it and moves on. Then we have a problem, as the child is not using his brain.



Children are much more tech savvy and even AI-savvy than they were a few years ago. So I don't think bans and restrictions are the solution. It is better to understand artificial intelligence and make our children aware of the pros and cons

LAVINA JASWANI

Instead, we need to guide the child on how to use it and that is where we need to put the restriction.

Suppose you are trying to teach fractions or some kind of problem-solving lesson. If the AI gives the answer, the child misses the struggle, the trial and error, the logical thinking, and the satisfaction of finally getting the answer.

So the rule in my classroom is that first, the child needs to think it, then write it and then lastly, ask the AI to verify the answer. They must try to solve it themselves, but if they can't, just as they may ask their parents or their teacher for help, they can ask AI too to provide assistance in the same way.

DJ: The problem is over-reliance. If you've been driving a manual car and then you shift to an automatic car, you're going to find it really hard to go back to driving manual, right? Similarly, I think you can become over-reliant on someone else doing the thinking for you or even synthesising ideas by just feeding them into an AI tool such as the Notebook LLM. The capacity of the human brain is immeasurable. There's so much study that has gone into how brains function, and their neuroplasticity. It would be a shame if we let it die. Especially in the primary and elementary years, where so much of growth is happening.

So while AI is a great tool, I think we should be very cautious in how it is used.

At the same time, I don't think a complete ban is the answer and a one-year moratorium may not be enough to think through, to plan, and to set up some guardrails around how AI should be used in education.

AI is now an integral part of basic search, of Google, of emails, and even in games. So students are using AI whenever they use the Internet at home. So why keep it out of class?

DJ: As educators, we don't really have control over what kids are exposed to at home, but the one place where we can still teach critical thinking skills is in the classroom. I think we have to preserve that as far as we can. Also, I think children these days are really good at spotting something that's AI-generated versus the real thing, and for many of them it is not cool anymore.

I feel like we, the older generation, are more

easily fooled when it comes to AI.

LJ: Children are much more tech savvy and even AI-savvy than they were a few years ago. So I don't think bans and restrictions are the solution. It is better to understand AI and make our children aware of the pros and cons.

Central and State governments are starting to commission pilot projects using AI tools in government schools and in rural areas where there is a shortage of quality teachers, in the hope that AI can bridge that gap. Could AI supplement or even replace teachers in some of these schools?

LJ: AI should not replace a teacher; it should extend the teacher. Especially in primary education, where children learn best through stories, activities, and conversations – moments that are very important to human relationships. That bond with the teacher is very important. So I would never want AI to become the teacher sitting in front of the children. I see AI as a learning assistant.

DJ: My first job was in a village school and there were times I wished I had more resources and more tools, especially to translate more content and make it accessible. But I agree that you cannot completely do away with teachers just because knowledge can be found anywhere. But if you think of schools as not just knowledge centres, but wisdom centres where you learn from other human beings about how to become a good human, then you need teachers to be present, curating resources for the child.

How have you found AI helpful for teacher preparation and training?

DJ: Prep time is very limited so AI tools really help. If I input what I need to teach into Gemini, it helps me create slide decks that I can then present to the class, but again, we need to be careful because we have learnt through experience that AI can hallucinate and put out wrong information, so teachers do need to double check.

LJ: It can help teachers use different techniques in their classroom. Suppose I am teaching fractions in class and one child understands the concept immediately, but another child is still confused; traditionally, the second child may simply hear the same explanation again, but an AI tool can guide the teacher to teach fractions in a more visual and fun way by using a chocolate and dividing it up.



To listen to the full interview
Scan the code or go to the link
www.thehindu.com

Key Points & Deep Analysis

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Daily News Analysis

- **Pedagogical Purpose vs. Shortcut Culture:** AI should complement specific learning objectives rather than act as an answer key. Instant solutions risk bypassing the "liminal space"—the critical cognitive phase where students struggle, trial, and independently master concepts.
- **AI as a Diagnostic and Remedial Tool:** For teachers, AI speeds up resource creation (worksheets, quizzes, slide decks) and enables adaptive, gamified learning. For students, diagnostic tools (e.g., automated reading fluency scoring) assist skill practice, provided human oversight corrects algorithmic errors (such as accent biases).
- **The Risk of Over-Reliance and Loss of Neuroplasticity:** Unregulated access during early developmental years can atrophy independent critical thinking and synthesis, fostering a reliance similar to transitioning from manual to automatic driving.
- **Teacher Augmentation, Not Replacement:** Human connection, storytelling, and mentorship are irreplaceable in early education. AI works best as a personalized learning assistant, particularly in resource-constrained environments, but cannot replace a teacher.
- **Regulation Over Blanket Bans:** Total bans are impractical given AI's integration into daily digital environments. Effective policies focus on structured boundaries: students must first attempt independent thinking and writing before using AI solely for verification and feedback.

Static & Syllabus Dimensions (UPSC Relevance)

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Education):** National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 on technology integration; regulatory policy frameworks for emerging technologies in public school systems.
- **GS Paper III (Technology & Ethics):** Ethical implications of Artificial Intelligence; algorithmic bias in education technology; digital divide versus educational access.
- **Static Pedagogical Concepts:** Constructivist learning theory; neuroplasticity in early childhood development; cognitive struggle vs. automated problem-solving.

Conclusion

A total ban on Generative AI in schools is neither feasible nor constructive; however, unguided access risks diminishing fundamental cognitive development. The future of primary education lies in strict contextual guardrails—deploying AI as an assistant to extend teacher capability and verify student effort while preserving human interaction and independent problem-solving at the core of learning.

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: "The challenge before educational policymakers is not whether to allow Artificial Intelligence in schools, but how to integrate it without compromising foundational learning." Discuss.. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

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The regulation of Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs) in India presents a significant challenge to electoral integrity and financial transparency. While registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act), a vast majority of RUPPs do not contest elections meaningfully, operating instead as "letter pad parties". Recent revelations—such as six Gujarat-based RUPPs raising over ₹1,700 crore—underscore how these entities can be exploited for tax evasion and money laundering under the guise of political activity.

How should RUPPs be regulated?

Why do some RUPPs remain active despite poor compliance? How can their misuse be curbed? What can be done to improve transparency? Should RUPPs face a vote threshold for tax breaks? How can the EC act against non-serious parties?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan R.

The story so far:

A 'BBC News Hindi' investigation has revealed that six Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPP), all based in Gujarat, had received donations of around ₹1,700 crores for the year 2023-24. This is higher than the total received by five nationally recognised political parties, except the BJP, for the same period, which stood at ₹1,480 crores.

What are registered parties?

Political parties are an association or body of individuals that can be formed by citizens. Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) lays down the requirements for registration of a political party with the Election Commission (EC). After satisfactory scrutiny of the documents submitted, the EC registers a political party as a RUPP. The RUPPs enjoy the following benefits – (a) tax exemption for donations received under Section 12 of the Income Tax Act, 2025, (b) common symbol for contesting general elections to the Lok Sabha/State Assemblies, and (c) 20 'star campaigners' during election campaign. The RUPPs are required to maintain the details of individual donors above twenty thousand rupees in a financial year and submit them to the poll body every year. As per section 29C of the Representation of the People Act, failure to furnish these details will result in losing income tax exemption.

The RUPPs, under the Income Tax Act, 2025, are required to accept donations in excess of two thousand rupees only through cheque or bank transfers.

What are the issues?

As per the EC notification, India had more than 2,800 RUPPs as of July, but only around 750 contested the 2024 general elections. This has resulted in the moniker – 'letter pad parties' – for the rest of the RUPPs. The RP Act does not



GETTY IMAGES

confer explicit powers on the EC to de-register a political party if it fails to contest elections, conduct inner-party elections, or lodge requisite returns. In the *Indian National Congress vs Institute of Social Welfare & Ors* (2002), the Supreme Court held that the EC does not have the power to de-register any political party under the RP Act. It may de-register only under exceptional circumstances, such as registration obtained by fraud, the political party ceasing to have allegiance to the Constitution, or being declared unlawful by the government. The EC periodically publishes the list of de-listed RUPPs. The October 2025 notification contains over 800 such parties.

However, the six RUPPs – Aam Janmat Party, Bharatiya National Janata Dal, Garib Kalyan Party, New India United Party, Satyawadi Rakshak Party and the Swatantrata Abhividyakti Party – remain on the list of active RUPPs as per the EC notification in October 2025. This is because they managed to field a total of 15 candidates during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The Association for Democratic

Reforms periodically publishes reports on the status of submission of annual reports of RUPPs. In its July 2025 report, in which the annual reports of 2022-23 are analysed, it is stated that reports of only 26% of RUPPs are available in the public domain. Poor compliance with statutory requirements, coupled with a lack of transparency, results in these 'letter pad' parties being used as an opaque channel for tax evasion and money laundering.

What needs to be done?

The Law Commission, in its 255th report, had recommended amendments for de-registration of a political party if it fails to contest elections for ten consecutive years. The EC, in its memorandum for electoral reforms (2016), also suggested an amendment to the RP Act that would empower it to de-register a party. These are long-pending reforms that need to be carried out to empower the EC to act against non-serious parties, some of which are merely a façade for illegal financial transactions.

However, if parties contest elections

merely to fulfil a statutory requirement, they could continue to misuse their tax exemptions and be used for money laundering and other nefarious activities. In the present digital world, it is not difficult for the Income Tax Department and other enforcement agencies to monitor the transactions of such parties and take strict action against any wrongdoing. This would act as a deterrent against the misuse of the benefits and exemptions available to political parties. The EC had also suggested that tax exemptions be provided only for political parties that win seats in Lok Sabha or Legislative Assembly elections. This can be viewed as an undemocratic and extreme measure, as there are parties that consistently contest elections without electoral success. Instead, similar to the 1% vote threshold for allotting common symbols to RUPPs, a suitable vote percentage threshold may be stipulated by law for RUPPs to avail of tax exemptions on donations received. (Rangarajan R. is a former IAS officer. Views expressed are personal)

THE GIST

Six Gujarat-based RUPPs received about ₹1,700 crore in donations in 2023-24, raising concerns over opaque political funding

Weak statutory provisions and poor compliance allow many non-serious RUPPs to remain active and potentially misuse tax exemptions

The EC needs stronger powers to de-register such parties, while a suitable vote threshold could determine eligibility for tax exemptions

Key Questions & Deep Analysis

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1. Why do some RUPPs remain active despite poor compliance?

- **Lack of Deregistration Powers:** Under the Supreme Court's ruling in *Indian National Congress v. Institute of Social Welfare (2002)*, the Election Commission of India (ECI) lacks statutory authority under the RP Act to deregister a party except in rare cases of fraud, unconstitutionality, or illegal status.
- **Token Participation:** RUPPs bypass delisting checks by fielding a handful of candidates in general or state assembly elections. This minimal contestation satisfies the literal requirement of being an active political entity without needing genuine electoral support.
- **Institutional Gaps in Oversight:** Delisting by the ECI does not automatically trigger the withdrawal of tax exemptions by the Income Tax Department, allowing non-compliant parties to function without operational disruption.

2. How can their misuse be curbed?

- **Inter-Agency Enforcement:** The Income Tax Department and enforcement agencies must proactively audit RUPP transactions, track financial flows, and prosecute money laundering.
- **Statutory Amendments:** The Representation of the People Act should be amended—as recommended by the Law Commission (255th Report) and the ECI—to explicitly empower the poll body to deregister parties that do not contest elections for consecutive cycles or fail to submit mandatory financial returns.
- **Strict Compliance Thresholds:** Mandatory annual submission of audited financial accounts, contribution reports, and electoral expenditure statements must be strictly enforced before any statutory benefits are extended.

3. What can be done to improve transparency?

- **Lowering Mandatory Disclosure Thresholds:** The reporting threshold for individual donor contributions should be aligned with the cash transaction limit (e.g., reporting all donations above ₹2,000) to eliminate the practice of splitting large unaccounted sums into smaller anonymous contributions.
- **Mandatory Digital Disclosures:** All RUPPs should be mandated to file standardized digital returns, which must be immediately published on a centralized ECI portal for public scrutiny.

4. Should RUPPs face a vote threshold for tax breaks?

- **Beyond Token Participation:** Blanket tax exemptions under Section 12 of the Income Tax Act create financial incentives for entities that exist purely on paper.
- **Proposed Vote Percentage Threshold:** Rather than restricting tax benefits solely to parties that win seats (which disadvantages genuine but emerging political movements), a reasonable vote share threshold (e.g., 1% of valid votes polled, similar to the threshold for assigning common symbols) could be linked to tax exemption eligibility. This prevents misuse while maintaining a level playing field for non-winning candidates.

5. How can the ECI act against non-serious parties?

- **Periodic Delisting Drives:** Until statutory deregistration powers are granted, the ECI must continue systematically delisting dormant RUPPs and notifying financial authorities.
- **Stricter Symbol Allotment Criteria:** Common symbol privileges should be contingent on verifiable internal elections and timely financial reporting.
- **Empowerment via Electoral Reforms:** Parliament must pass statutory reforms giving the ECI explicit administrative power to cancel the registration of parties that violate constitutional allegiance, commit continuous reporting defaults, or fail basic contestation benchmarks.

Static & Syllabus Dimensions (UPSC Relevance)

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Polity):**
 - Salient features of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (Sections 29A and 29C).
 - Powers, functions, and limitations of the Election Commission of India under Article 324.
 - Electoral reforms, funding of political parties, and judicial precedents (*INC v. Institute of Social Welfare, 2002*).
- **GS Paper III (Economy & Security):**
 - Money laundering, tax evasion mechanisms, and role of enforcement agencies.
 - Provisions of the Income Tax Act (Section 12 exemption for political parties).

Conclusion

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Regulating RUPPs requires striking a delicate balance between fostering political participation and preventing systemic financial abuse. Empowering the ECI with statutory deregistration powers, tying tax exemptions to minimum electoral performance metrics, and ensuring real-time inter-agency financial tracking are essential steps to eliminate "letter pad" parties and restore transparency to Indian electoral funding.

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: "The distinction between registration and recognition of political parties is central to understanding India's electoral system." Explain. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

GS Paper II: International Relations

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Questions: "Trade agreements create opportunities for economic integration but do not eliminate the possibility of protectionist pressures."

Discuss in the context of India's trade negotiations with major economies. **15Marks, 250**

Words)

Context :

The ongoing breakdown in U.S.–Canada trade negotiations serves as a critical cautionary case study for Indian trade policy. The bilateral rift between North America's deeply integrated economies highlights the precarious nature of negotiating trade pacts with Washington. Based on the passage, India must recalibrate its strategic assumptions, evaluate long-term risks, and prioritize net domestic advantage over expedited trade agreements.

Key Lessons for India

- **No Immunity for Close Partners:** Canada—a direct neighbor, military ally, and historic free-trade partner—faces punitive 50% U.S. tariffs, reciprocal levies, and severe import bans on dairy, alcohol, and motorcycles effective September 29. India cannot assume historical goodwill or strategic alignment will grant it preferential economic treatment.
- **Speed Should Not Supersede Terms:** Rapid execution of trade deals can trap a country in unfavorable terms. Canada suspended talks due to last-minute U.S. demands, and Malaysia withdrew after identifying that reciprocal tariff systems degraded the net benefits. India must rigorously weigh concessions against market access gains.

Rude lessons

India should learn from Canada and be wary of deals with the U.S.

The U.S.-Canada trade dispute has a few sharp lessons for India. The two economies have been deeply economically integrated since at least 1965, when they established free trade in automobiles and their parts. This then widened into a full-fledged free trade agreement in 1989, which was expanded into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) about five years later. The economic integration between the U.S. and Canada has steadily continued and, by all accounts, has worked well for both economies. The target for the much smaller Canadian economy was to achieve economies of scale by producing vast amounts of a few products. According to Nobel laureate Paul Krugman, Canada accounts for 70% of the oil refined in the American Midwest, and supplies 60% of the nation's aluminium. It also supplies nearly all the types of lumber used in U.S. residential construction. Yet, despite this long and fruitful trade partnership, their economic relationship has fallen to a new low. Canada pulled out of negotiations over a new tariff deal citing last-minute insertions by the U.S. side. The U.S. has made a similar allegation against Canada. Canada recently levied reciprocal tariffs on the U.S. of up to 50% as a reaction to the 50% tariffs that the U.S. has imposed on imports from Canada. From September 29, the U.S. will outright ban certain Canadian alcoholic spirits, some dairy goods, and motorcycles. Statements by U.S. President Donald Trump are hardly conciliatory in nature.

The first lesson for India lies here: if this is how the U.S. treats a next-door neighbour, alliance member, and long-standing trade partner, India should not take for granted any favourable treatment that it might receive from the U.S. The second lesson is that barrelling ahead with trade deals might not always be the best plan. Before Canada, Malaysia also backed out of a deal it had signed with the U.S. It argued that once the U.S.'s reciprocal tariff system was deemed illegal, the benefit from a trade deal no longer outweighed the costs of opening up to the U.S. Despite the success of its recent trade pacts, India should weigh the same pros and cons when it comes to the U.S., especially since a deal might not be the end of the tariff pressure. India has faced this before. Despite the February 2026 agreement of 18% tariffs on imports from India, the U.S. has forged ahead with its forced labour and excess capacity investigations that could see tariff levels exceed that limit. India has done well to insist that a deal will not be struck until its advantage over its competitors is clear. The third lesson is that this advantage can vanish even after a deal is struck.

Daily News Analysis

- **Deals Do Not Guarantee Tariff Stability:** Signing a trade deal does not eliminate post-agreement pressure. Despite establishing a baseline 18% tariff framework in February 2026, India faces ongoing U.S. investigations into forced labor and excess capacity that threaten higher duties.
- **Preserving Comparative Advantage:** India must maintain its firm stance of refusing trade deals unless clear, durable competitive advantages for domestic industries are secured.

Static & Syllabus Dimensions (UPSC Relevance)

- **GS Paper II (International Relations & Policy Frameworks):**
 - **Bilateral & Regional Groupings:** Evolution of regional trade blocks (NAFTA to USMCA) and their structural limits.
 - **Strategic Autonomy:** Managing non-alignment principles while negotiating with major economic powers.
- **GS Paper III (Economy & International Trade):**
 - **Protectionism vs. Free Trade:** Resurgence of non-tariff barriers (NTBs), counter-tariffs, and Section 232/338-style unilateral measures.
 - **Trade Negotiations:** Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) vs. Bilateral Trade Agreements; calculating net terms of trade.
- **Static Economic Concepts:** Economies of scale, Krugman's New Trade Theory (intra-industry trade dynamics), and Tariff/Quota Rate Structures.

Conclusion

The U.S.–Canada trade confrontation demonstrates that economic integration does not guarantee immunity from unilateral protectionism. India must maintain a cautious, value-driven strategy in its U.S. trade negotiations—ensuring that agreements safeguard domestic industry, preserve sovereign economic space, and offer durable protection against post-deal tariff escalations.