

The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

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The recent state visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Tashkent marks a structural transformation in India's foreign policy toward Central Asia. By elevating ties to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**, setting an ambitious **\$5 billion bilateral trade target by 2030**, and securing long-term civil nuclear fuel supplies via a **Uranium procurement framework**, India has signaled its intent to convert historical affinity into strategic interdependence.

India, Uzbekistan elevate strategic relationship

Uzbekistan is at heart of India's engagement in Central Asia, says PM Modi during two-day visit

Two countries plan comprehensive strategic partnership; set \$5 billion trade target by 2030

Two sides agree to establish a framework for supply of Uranium from Uzbekistan to India

Press Trust of India
TASHKENT

India and Uzbekistan on Sunday decided to elevate their ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership and set a target of \$5 billion in annual trade by 2030 following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

The two sides inked 11 agreements for boosting engagement in several key sectors, including mining and tourism, and agreed to establish a framework for long-term supply of Uranium from Uzbekistan to India in line with cooperation in the civil nuclear energy sector.

The talks focused on expanding cooperation in areas of critical minerals, mining, defence and security, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, digital public infrastructure, including

UPI, and education.

"We are celebrating the 15th anniversary of our strategic partnership. I am delighted that, on this special occasion, we are elevating our ties to the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership," Mr. Modi said.

"We will move forward by setting concrete goals within this framework," he said.

Mr. Modi said both sides will also elevate their existing joint commission from the level of secretaries to that of ministerial level.

Mr. Mirziyoyev said Uzbekistan is determined to boost ties with India in diverse sectors. "We are aiming to advance cooperation in sectors such as energy, culture, critical minerals, pharmaceuticals, jewellery, and agriculture," the Uzbek President said.

The current volume of bilateral trade between the two nations is over \$1



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev after receiving the country's highest national award. ANI

billion.

"Uzbekistan is at the heart of Central Asia and is at the heart of India's engagement in the region," Mr. Modi said.

The Prime Minister added: "A stronger India-Uzbekistan partnership will be a powerful force for peace, progress and prosperity in Central Asia."

Delving into the ambitious agenda of future cooperation between the

two sides, Mr. Modi said India and Uzbekistan will encourage their defence industries to look at co-development and co-production of military hardware.

A joint statement said the two leaders agreed to expand cooperation in the field of critical minerals through the implementation of joint projects in geological exploration, mining, mineral processing,

and the development of integrated value chains.

"The close defence and security cooperation between our two countries reflects our deep mutual trust. In the future, we will promote direct linkages, co-production, and co-development between our defence industries," Mr. Modi said.

"We believe that terrorism, extremism, and separatism pose serious challenges to the entire region," Mr. Modi said. "Maintaining a policy of zero tolerance against these threats has been, and will continue to be, our shared resolve."

A Letter of Intent for the restoration and conservation of the Buddhist sites of Fayaz Tepa and Kara Tepa in Uzbekistan was also agreed upon. These ancient Buddhist monasteries in southern Uzbekistan highlight how Buddhism spread along the Silk Road

and flourished in Central Asia.

Pact on UPI payments

The two sides announced that a commercial pact was signed up between NPCI International Payments Ltd (NPCI) and Uzbekistan's National Interbank Processing Centre JSC to enable UPI apps of India to scan Uzbekistan's national QR (UZQR) for making merchant payments in the Central Asian nation.

The announcements included a grant of \$1 million for afforestation in the Aral Sea region.

Mr. Modi landed in Tashkent on Saturday on a two-day visit to bolster ties with Uzbekistan.

In his opening remarks at the bilateral talks, the Prime Minister also made a mention of the "productive talks" he had with the Uzbek President over dinner last night.

"We had a productive

discussion over dinner last night and took several important decisions." "We will establish a Coordination Council at the level of Foreign Ministers to provide direction to all aspects of our cooperation through close coordination," Mr. Modi said.

Amid a complex geopolitical situation, they stressed the need for a free, open and rules-based international order, building on their multilateral cooperation, a joint statement said.

"The leaders highly appreciated the progress achieved in regional cooperation and reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening engagement within Central Asia-India format at the level of Heads of States and other levels," the statement added.

PM VISITS MEMORIAL
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Uzbekistan, as the geo-strategic heart of Central Asia, serves as the anchor for New Delhi's "Connect Central Asia" policy.

Core Takeaways of the Bilateral Summit

- **Civil Nuclear & Energy Security:** Framework agreement for long-term Uranium supply to meet India's domestic clean energy requirements.
- **Defense Co-Production:** Shift from basic joint exercises (Ex-DUSTLIK) toward co-development and co-production of defense hardware.
- **Economic & Financial Integration:** Commercial pact between NPCI and NIPC for UPI deployment via UZQR merchant payment integration.
- **Critical Minerals & Mining:** Mining, processing, and value-chain integration of rare earths and critical minerals.

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Daily News Analysis

- **Soft Power & Conservation:** Letter of Intent for conserving ancient Buddhist sites (Fayaz Tepa and Kara Tepa) along the Silk Road.

Strategic & Static Dimensions

1. Geopolitical Significance

- **Heartland Theory Relevance:** Mackinder's theory posits control over Central Eurasia as central to global power balance; Uzbekistan anchors this landmass.
- **Counterweighting Regional Dynamics:** Balances China's footprint via its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China-Central Asia pipeline network.
- **Institutional Coordination:** Operates across SCO, the India-Central Asia Summit, and BRICS frameworks.

2. Strategic Energy & Mineral Security

- **Nuclear Diversification:** Adds to India's uranium supply security alongside Kazakhstan and Canada, aiding nuclear energy target realization.
- **Supply Chain Resilience:** Access to critical minerals (copper, molybdenum, rare earths) is vital for India's clean energy transition and high-tech manufacturing.

3. Connectivity & Trade Architecture (GS Paper II & III)

- **Overcoming Land-Locking:** Integration via **Chabahar Port** (Iran) and the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** to bypass land-transit barriers through Pakistan.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Exporting the UPI model expands financial technology ties across the Eurasian continent.

4. Security & Regional Stability

- **Afghanistan & Counter-Terrorism:** Shared "zero-tolerance" policy on extremism, terrorism, and separatism, vital for maintaining security along Afghanistan's northern border.
- **Military Interoperability:** Continued conduct of joint exercises like Exercise DUSTLIK.

Key Challenges to Address

- **Transit Friction:** Sanctions on Iran hamper full-capacity usage of Chabahar Port and INSTC routes.
- **Trade Asymmetry:** Current trade stands at ~\$1 billion; reaching \$5 billion by 2030 requires substantial cargo infrastructure upgrades.

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- **Competition:** Competing initiatives like China's China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan (CKU) railway.

Conclusion

The elevation of ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership aligns with New Delhi's vision of a multi-polar Asia. By linking Uzbekistan's Yangi Uzbekistan initiative with India's Viksit Bharat 2047 goals, both nations establish a framework for economic, clean energy, and security cooperation across Eurasia. Maintain momentum across key areas will be essential to achieving the \$5 billion trade target by 2030.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: The strategic importance of Chabahar Port for India is primarily associated with:

- A. Providing India a direct maritime route to Europe without passing through the Suez Canal
- B. Facilitating connectivity with Afghanistan and Central Asia while bypassing Pakistan
- C. Establishing India's naval dominance in the Persian Gulf
- D. Providing direct access to China's western provinces

Ans: B)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: How can India deepen its strategic partnership with Central Asian states while balancing China's growing economic and infrastructure footprint in the region?(10 Marks, 150 Words)

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The catastrophic flash flood along the Bhotekoshi and Trishuli river systems—triggered by a massive glacial collapse near the Nepal-China border—highlights the severe vulnerability of the Hindu Kush Himalaya (HKH) region. Beyond the immediate loss of life, the event demonstrates the critical challenges of post-disaster body identification, epidemic prevention, transboundary river hazards, and vulnerable critical infrastructure like hydropower projects.

Core Issues & Analytical Dimensions

- **Glacial Instability & Climate Vulnerability:** Rising global temperatures are accelerating thermal degradation of high-altitude permafrost and glacier ice. Unlike Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), vertical glacial structural failures release massive kinetic energy, turning river basins into high-density flows of mud, ice, and rock debris.
- **Forensic & Public Health Bottlenecks:** Rapid body decomposition in flood debris poses severe epidemiological hazards. The shortage of cold storage units, airtight body bags, and DNA profiling kits underscores the urgent need for forensic disaster management capacities. Mass burials following systematically cataloged DNA sampling balance public health imperatives with the legal right of families to identify deceased kin.
- **Hydropower & Infrastructure Vulnerability:** Over 900 workers trapped or missing in subterranean tunnels highlight the high risk faced by run-of-the-river hydropower projects in geologically active fault lines. Subsurface engineering in mountain regions often lacks adequate early-warning systems or emergency evacuation protocols.
- **Transboundary Disaster Dynamics:** The disaster originated in Tibet (China) and devastated downstream infrastructure in Nepal, with victims' remains drifting as far as downstream river reaches in India. This highlights the necessity of real-time hydrological data sharing across international borders.

788 dead, 2,500 missing in Nepal; preservation of bodies presents challenges

Sanjeev Satgajanya
KATHMANDU

Four days after the flood in Nepal, the death toll in the disaster touched 788, and 2,502 people remained missing even as the preservation of recovered bodies became a challenge for the authorities who continued with the rescue efforts.

Foreign Secretary Amrit Bahadur Rai said Nepal urgently required freezer units and DNA-testing kits, warning that the bodies must be preserved and identified quickly to prevent decomposition and contain public-health risks. He said the government is "putting all our resources at disposal in relief and rescue operations."

"We have requested several countries," he said. "Some other immediate requirements, like airtight bags for storing bodies, have started to arrive and other equipment are expected to arrive soon," he added.

More than 900 workers are missing from hydropower sites, and officials believe around 100 people trapped inside tunnels are alive. Mr. Rai said experts from India, China, and South Korea joined the Nepal Army's efforts in rescuing these workers.

The Nepal Army said that after floodwaters receded, its rescue teams resumed efforts to locate tunnel entrances using drilling machines, excavators, hydraulic cutters and other heavy equipment.

Mass burials
Authorities also began mass burials of unidentified bodies in Chitwan, around 200 km from Rasuwa, on Saturday after collecting DNA samples so that the remains can be exhumed if the victims are identified.

Madan Lama, an information officer at the District Administration Office in Chitwan, said around 170 bodies had been buried since Saturday, including 96 on the first day, after collecting DNA samples.

An Indian forensic team specialising in DNA testing and analysis arrived to support health officials in collecting samples.

India's External Affairs Ministry said in New Delhi on Saturday that more than 275 Indians and 128 persons of Indian origin remained missing. On Sunday, it shared a list of 149 people who were rescued.

The Nepal Tourism Board said 591 foreign nationals remain missing and 289 have been rescued, including 180 Indian and 89 Chinese nationals.

Earlier on Sunday, authorities warned of possible fresh flooding and urged residents in affected districts to remain on high alert as water levels rose in the Bhotekoshi River.

Nature's fury: Houses lie partially submerged in slush in Nuwakot district of Nepal. PRABHAT KHANAL

A suspension bridge in central Nepal was swept away on Sunday morning due to a fresh flood in the Trishuli River, according to officials.

Prakash Pokharel, a geologist and researcher at the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Authority, said flood warnings had been sent to people's phones.

The flood, triggered by a glacial collapse, left hundreds missing on the Tibet side, where Chinese authorities reported 16 deaths and 546 people unaccounted for.

Asked about the status of Nepali citizens in the disaster-hit area of Tibet, Mr. Rai said China has provided a list that will be updated.

The disaster had struck on Wednesday when a glacial collapse near the Nepal-China border in Rasuwa district triggered a massive surge of water, mud and debris through the Bhotekoshi and Trishuli river systems.

'WARNING TO INDIA'
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DATA POINT
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Key UPSC Static Dimensions

Dimension	Key Concepts & Static Linkages
GS Paper III (Disaster Management)	• Sendai Framework for DRR (2015–2030): Priorities 1 (Understanding Risk) and 4 (Enhancing preparedness for effective response).

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Dimension	Key Concepts & Static Linkages
	• Disaster Forensic Science: Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for DVI (Disaster Victim Identification) using DNA profiling and forensic odontology. • Critical Infrastructure Resilience: CDRI (Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure) guidelines for high-altitude engineering.
GS Paper III (Environment & Ecology)	• Cryosphere Degradation: Permafrost thawing, glacier mass balance loss, and slope destabilization in the Himalayas. • Compound Hazards: Cascading disaster chains (Glacial Collapse → Landslide Dam → Debris Flow → Flash Flood).
GS Paper II (International Relations)	• Transboundary River Water Governance: Coordinated hydrological data sharing between upper riparian (China) and lower riparian (Nepal, India) states. • Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR): Neighborhood First policy and regional coordination via SAARC/BIMSTEC frameworks.

Way Forward

- **Regional Early Warning Systems (EWS):** Establish real-time, satellite-linked transboundary hydro-meteorological data sharing between China, Nepal, and India to enhance lead times for evacuation.
- **Disaster-Resilient Infrastructure Norms:** Mandate rigorous geomorphological risk assessments and emergency refuge chambers for subterranean engineering (hydropower tunnels, mountain roads).
- **Forensic Disaster Capacity:** Develop regional stockpiles of DVI kits, mobile DNA testing laboratories, and specialized forensic response units under HADR cooperation frameworks.
- **Climate Adaptation & Cryosphere Monitoring:** Expand high-altitude automatic weather stations (AWS) and synthetic aperture radar (SAR) monitoring to detect glacier micro-deformations prior to structural collapse.

Conclusion

The tragedy along the Bhotekoshi basin serves as a stark reminder that the Himalayas are experiencing accelerated climate impacts. Disaster management protocols must shift from reactive relief operations to proactive, transboundary, and forensic-ready risk mitigation strategies to ensure both human safety and resilient economic infrastructure.

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UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question: In the context of disaster management, Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) primarily aims to:

- A. Determine the financial compensation payable to victims
- B. Scientifically establish the identity of deceased persons following mass-fatality events
- C. Predict the location of future disasters
- D. Determine the geological origin of a disaster

Ans: B)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "Himalayan disaster management must shift from hazard-specific response to cascading-risk management." Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

Page 08: GS I & II : Social Issues and Justice / Preliminary Examination

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) recently reviewed India for the first time since 2007. It expressed "grave concern" over targeted violence against ethno-religious minorities, Dalits, and non-citizens by law enforcement. While New Delhi argues that caste bias falls outside the ambit of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD, 1968), CERD maintains that discrimination based on inherited status falls within its mandate. This friction highlights the conflict between national sovereignty and international human rights accountability.

Key Concerns Raised by CERD

- **Targeted Law Enforcement & Violence:** Allegations of physical and structural violence against marginalized communities, ethno-religious minorities, and Dalits without timely state inquiries or sanctions.
- **Institutional & Legislative Gaps:** Absence of explicit provisions criminalizing racist hate speech in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), alongside exemptions for "national security" projects in the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act without consultative decision-making.
- **Misuse of Security and Regulatory Statutes:** Over-reliance on instruments like FCRA, UAPA, AFSPA, and PMLA, which hamper the legitimate functioning of civil society organizations (CSOs).
- **Citizenship & Human Rights Issues:** Mass deprivation risks linked to the National Register of Citizens (NRC), arbitrary electoral roll deletions, mass refolement of Rohingya refugees, and the ongoing practice of manual scavenging.
- **Weakened National Watchdogs:** The potential status downgrade of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) by GANHRI due to a lack of pluralism and the appointment of police officers to investigative roles.

Impact of Data Vacuum on Governance

- **Impediment to Policy & Scrutiny:** Prolonged delays in conducting the Decennial Census and releasing National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data hinder empirical evaluation of caste- and faith-based discrimination.
- **Flawed Affirmative Action:** Relying on outdated 2011 Census metrics for "special measures" risks masking socio-economic regression among Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Adivasis.

Related Static Dimensions (UPSC Polity & Governance)

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State of exception

India must not normalise a culture of discrimination

In its first review by the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) since 2007, India has elicited an expression of "grave concern" about reports of the law enforcement apparatus resorting to violence – physical and otherwise – against minority ethnic and ethno-religious groups, Dalits, and non-citizens over the years. The Committee also noted that India, which ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 1968, has not provided detailed and updated information about the state's inquiries and sanctions arising from allegations of such violence. While the government has told CERD that caste bias falls outside Article 1 of the convention because caste is not synonymous with race, CERD has allowed all forms of discrimination based on inherited status. The Committee's concerns also span the practice of manual cleaning of sewers despite a law banning it; hate speech against, poor living conditions of, and the mass refolement of Rohingya Muslims; the mass deprivation of citizenship via the National Register of Citizens; large-scale deletions from the Special Intensive Revisions of electoral rolls; the government's use of the FCRA, UAPA, AFSPA, and PMLA instruments to hamper the work of civil society organisations; the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita not expressly criminalising racist hate speech; and the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act exempting "national security" projects from consultative decision-making.

Given these issues and the fragmented recourse available, the lack of suitably disaggregated data on disenfranchised communities, including due to a much-delayed Census and the slow release of NCRB data, has transcended the bounds of administrative lethargy to actively impeding independent checks of India's claims about fighting caste- and faith-based discrimination. In fact, India has been implementing "special measures" based on 2011 Census data, which could mask a regression in the socioeconomic status of Scheduled Tribes and Adivasis. Together with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions recommending the downgrade of the NHRC last year, following the government appointing police officers to investigative roles and a lack of pluralism, CERD is effectively stepping into a vacuum. The road ahead remains clear, from restoring the NHRC's independence and criminalising hate speech to supportive affirmative action, collecting and publishing disaggregated data, and improving the transparency of the electoral roll revisions, and strengthening enforcement overall. But if the government's attempted use of a technicality to keep the issues of 200 million Dalits a "domestic matter" and avoid international accountability – and its dismissal of CERD's concerns as politically motivated – is any guide, the task continues to fall to civil society to exert influence in multilateral fora and sustain political, legal, and administrative resistance to government choices that normalise India's sadly widespread culture of discrimination of all sorts.

Daily News Analysis

- **Constitutional Rights & Framework:**

- **Article 14:** Right to Equality before the law.
- **Article 15 & 16:** Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth, and equality of opportunity in public employment.
- **Article 17:** Abolition of Untouchability.
- **Article 21:** Right to Life and Personal Liberty.

- **Statutory Machinery:** Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 (NHRC), and the Prevention of Atrocities (PoA) Act, 1989.
- **International Treaties:** ICERD (India ratified in 1968) vs. Article 51(c) of the Indian Constitution (fostering respect for international law).

Way Forward

- **Restoring Institutional Autonomy:** Re-establish pluralism and independent investigative wings in the NHRC to regain global credentials.
- **Legislative Reforms:** Incorporate statutory definitions and penalties for hate speech and targeted hate crimes within the BNS framework.
- **Empirical Transparency:** Conduct the delayed Census immediately and regularly release disaggregated NCRB data to inform evidence-based affirmative policies.
- **Civic Engagement:** Engage constructively with multilateral platforms and CSOs rather than dismissing international oversight as mere political interference.

Conclusion

Dismissing international review mechanisms on technical grounds or labelling them as "politically motivated" risks isolating India from global human rights discourses. To uphold the constitutional vision of justice—social, economic, and political, the government must address institutional gaps, ensure transparent data collection, and foster an inclusive environment that firmly rejects systemic discrimination.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: With reference to Article 51(c) of the Constitution, consider the following statement: It directs the State to:

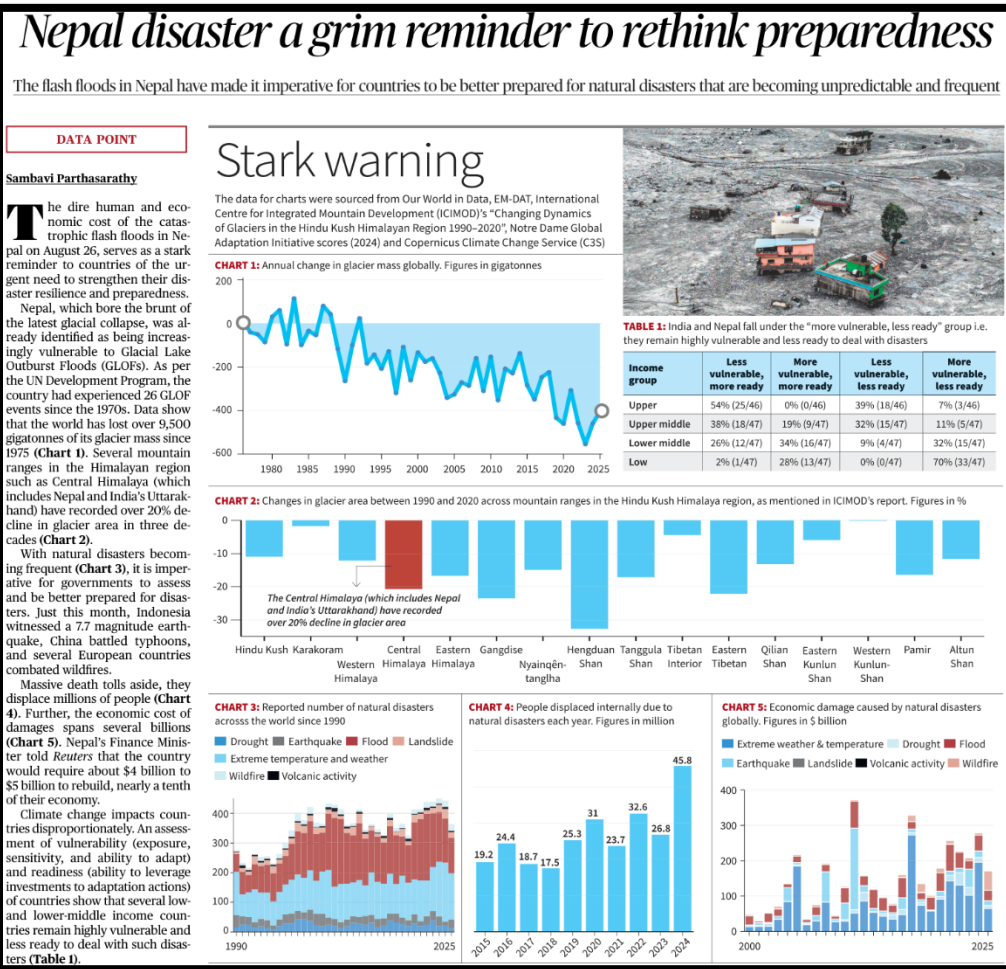
- A. Promote international peace and security
- B. Foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in the dealings of organised peoples with one another
- C. Protect the cultural rights of minorities
- D. Provide equal opportunity in public employment

Ans: B)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: "India's constitutional framework provides extensive protection against discrimination, but the challenge lies in converting formal equality into substantive equality." Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

The catastrophic flash flood along the Nepal-China border on August 26, 2026, triggered by a glacial collapse and ice-rock avalanche in the higher Himalayas, underscores the acute vulnerability of the Hindu Kush Himalayan (HKH) region. The surge along the Bhote Koshi and Trishuli rivers severely damaged settlements, critical infrastructure, and over 15 hydropower projects, claiming hundreds of lives and leaving thousands missing. Beyond its immediate human toll, the tragedy highlights how global climate pressures interact with structural vulnerabilities in developing, lower-middle-income nations.



Key Dimensions & Vulnerabilities Exposed

- Escalating Cryosphere Hazards:** Glacial retreat in the Central Himalayas (including Nepal and Uttarakhand) exceeds 20% over recent decades. Rising global temperatures accelerate glacial lake formation, raising the risk of high-magnitude Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) and multi-hazard cascading disasters.
- Disproportionate Economic Impact:** Reconstruction costs for Nepal are estimated at \$4 billion to \$5 billion—nearly 10% of its GDP—illustrating how climate disasters strain fiscal capacities in developing nations.

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Daily News Analysis

- **Vulnerability-Readiness Gap:** High exposure and sensitivity coupled with weak adaptive capacity create systemic operational gaps in early warning, disaster response, and resilient infrastructure.
- **Transboundary & Regional Risk Cascades:** Hazards originating upstream (such as in Tibet/China) rapidly cross international borders, damaging cross-border power transmission, ecological zones, and downstream communities in India and Bangladesh.

Related Static Dimensions

- **Geography:** Geomorphology of the Himalayas; cryosphere dynamics; mechanics of GLOFs, cloudbursts, and ice-rock avalanches.
- **Disaster Management :**
 - Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030): Prioritizing understanding risk, strengthening risk governance, and "Building Back Better."
 - Disaster Management Act, 2005 (India): Structural & non-structural mitigation strategies for mountain hazards.
- **International Relations & Transboundary Governance:** Transboundary river basin management, regional disaster response mechanisms (SAARC Disaster Management Centre), and climate diplomacy under the UNFCCC framework.
- **Environment & Economy:** Climate adaptation financing, Loss and Damage Fund (COP27/COP28), and sustainable infrastructure planning in fragile eco-zones.

Way Forward

- **Transboundary Data-Sharing & Early Warning:** Establish real-time hydrological, meteorological, and satellite data-sharing agreements among HKH nations (India, Nepal, China, Bhutan) to enhance lead times for downstream warnings.
- **Climate-Resilient Infrastructure Planning:** Conduct mandatory Cumulative Environmental Impact Assessments (CEIA) for hydropower, road, and urban projects along fragile river corridors.
- **Empowerment of Local Institutions:** Decentralize disaster response resources to municipal and panchayat levels, ensuring local authorities receive regular training, equipment, and capacity building.
- **Global Adaptation Finance:** Mobilize international climate funds (Green Climate Fund, Loss and Damage Fund) to support vulnerability reduction and infrastructure resilience in high-risk, low-income mountain economies.

Conclusion

The 2026 Nepal flash flood demonstrates that natural disasters operate across ecological units rather than sovereign borders. Mitigating Himalayan climate risks requires shifting from reactive disaster relief to proactive, cross-border risk governance. Protecting fragile mountain ecosystems and downstream populations necessitates strong regional cooperation, scientific monitoring, and sustainable development strategies tailored to extreme weather realities.

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: "Climate change is transforming the Himalayan cryosphere into a source of cascading hazards rather than merely altering seasonal water availability." Explain. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

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Page 13: GS III : Indian Economy / Preliminary Examination

India's 35-million-strong diaspora is evolving from traditional remittance senders into strategic equity investors and long-term capital providers. With India remaining the world's largest remittance recipient—recording **\$143.6 billion in inflows in FY26**—the focus is now shifting toward institutional, startup, and capital market investments. Driven by robust macroeconomic fundamentals, regulatory maturity, and digital public infrastructure, global Indian capital is set to play a pivotal role in driving India's next growth chapter.

Key Trends & Dimensions of Diaspora Participation

- **Shift from Remittances to Investment Capital:** Moving beyond traditional bank deposits, real estate, and gold toward high-yield asset classes like equities, debt, REITs, InvITs, Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), and green energy projects.
- **Strong Macroeconomic Backdrop:** Backed by foreign exchange reserves exceeding **\$700 billion**, sustained GDP growth, fiscal consolidation, and strong banking balance sheets that instill high investor confidence.
- **Financial Ecosystem Expansion:** Capitalizing on India's deep capital markets—evidenced by equity market capitalization reaching **\$5.18 trillion** and mutual fund AUM hitting **₹85.76 lakh crore**.
- **Catalytic Role of GIFT IFSC & DPI:** Leveraging GIFT City as a globally competitive offshore financial hub, alongside Digital Public Infrastructure (UPI, DigiLocker, e-KYC, Account Aggregators) for seamless international onboarding.

Challenges to Unlocking Diaspora Potential

- **Regulatory & Tax Ambiguities:** Complexities around FEMA (Foreign Exchange Management Act) compliance, FATCA/CRS reporting, differential taxation, and procedural friction in cross-border capital repatriation.
- **Ease of Investing Barriers:** Legacy perceptions regarding bureaucratic delays, paper-heavy documentation, and non-uniform digital verification across all asset classes.

Related Static Dimensions

- **Indian Diaspora & Foreign Policy:**
 - Soft power projection, Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, and diaspora diplomacy under Article 51 of the Constitution.
- **Economic Governance & Financial Markets :**

Diaspora to shape India's next growth chapter

India's next growth chapter will be driven not just by domestic demand, manufacturing and digitalisation. It will also be shaped by one of the country's most influential and underutilised assets: its global diaspora. Beyond remittances and emotional ties, overseas Indians—currently numbering 35-plus million—are turning into long-term participants in their native land's growth story.

Opinion
Sanjay Agarwal

India remains the world's largest recipient of remittances, with inflows of \$143.6 billion in FY26. These flows have supported millions of households, strengthened the country's external sector, and created enduring links with its diaspora. However, the coming decade may mark a more significant transition—from remittances to long-term growth capital.

Largest remittance recipient
Increasingly, non-resident Indians (NRIs) are looking at India not only as home but also one of the world's most compelling long-term investment destinations. This reflects a growing confidence in the country's economic fundamentals and institutional maturity. It paves the way for global Indian capital to become a meaningful participant in the country's

Investment case
Although the world's sixth largest economy in dollar terms, India remains the fastest growing major economy, supported by robust domestic demand, an expanding manufacturing base, rapid infrastructure development and a vibrant digital economy. Macroeconomic fundamentals have also strengthened considerably. Foreign exchange reserves remain strong at over \$700 billion, providing resilience against external shocks. Inflation remains well managed, fiscal consolidation continues, and the banking system is stronger, cleaner and better capitalised than it was a decade ago.

Equally important has been the consistency of reform. GST, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, production-linked incentive schemes, digital public infrastructure and sustained investment in connectivity have helped build a more formal, productive and competitive economy. Additionally, global supply chains are diversifying and manufacturing investment is expanding. India's young demographic provides a long runway for expansion. Many overseas Indians are showing a growing interest in the capital markets, startups, alternative assets, infrastructure and wealth management solutions on offer in the country of their origin.

Mature markets
Given the growing interest from overseas Indians, the country must continue simplifying their investment journey. Perceptions around regulatory complexity, taxation, documentation requirements and cross-border investment processes remain barriers. Continued efforts towards transparency, ease of investing and digital enablement can further unlock the immense potential of global Indian capital.

The country's financial ecosystem has, meanwhile, matured significantly. Equity market capitalisation reached \$5.18 trillion in July this year, retaining its position among the largest equity markets globally. Mutual fund assets under management expanded to ₹85.76 lakh crore, with monthly SIP contributions reaching a record ₹21,561 crore during the month.

Historically, investments by overseas Indians were concentrated in real estate, gold or bank deposits. Today, the opportunity spans equities, debt markets, REITs, infrastructure investment trusts, alternative investment funds, manufacturing, renewable energy, and the growing innovation ecosystem.

Digital access
Institutions such as the RBI, SEBI and IFSCA have strengthened governance standards, transparency and market integrity, while the development of GIFT IFSC is creating a globally competitive financial platform within India. Simplified digital onboarding, electronic KYC and progressive reforms have made investing in India far more seamless for global investors. Digital public infrastructure, including Aadhaar, UPI, DigiLocker and Account Aggregator framework, transformed access to financial participation.

(The writer is the founder, MD and CEO of AU Small Finance Bank)

Daily News Analysis

- **FDI vs. FPI vs. NRI Investments:** Capital account convertibility, RBI regulations under FEMA, and SEBI operational frameworks.
- **GIFT City (IFSCA):** Special Economic Zones Act, 2005, and offshore financial center architecture.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure (GS-III):** Financial inclusion mechanisms, secure digital identity systems, and unified payments interface architecture.

Way Forward

- **Streamlining Cross-Border Compliance:** Simplify tax treaties (DTAA), clarify capital gains taxation, and standardize unified digital onboarding for Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) and Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs).
- **Deepening GIFT IFSC Capabilities:** Expand product offerings at GIFT City—including diaspora-focused green bonds, venture capital funds, and wealth management trusts.
- **Targeted Engagement in Emerging Sectors:** Direct diaspora investments toward strategic national priorities, including renewable energy, semiconductor manufacturing, and deep-tech startups.

Conclusion

Transitioning the Indian diaspora from passive remittance providers to active co-creators of national wealth represents a vital strategic imperative. By continuing structural reforms, eliminating regulatory friction, and maximizing digital enablement, India can effectively harness global diaspora capital to sustain long-term economic growth and reinforce its position as a global economic hub.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: GIFT IFSC is primarily associated with:

- A. A domestic agricultural export zone
- B. An international financial-services ecosystem located within GIFT City
- C. A dedicated foreign-trade corridor between India and Europe
- D. A sovereign wealth fund managed by the RBI

Ans: B)

UPSC Mains Exam Study Questions

Question: "The Indian diaspora is evolving from a source of remittances into an instrument of India's economic and strategic diplomacy." Discuss. (10 Marks, 150 Words)

Nepal's agony, the Himalayan warning to India

Will India learn now at least? Will it let Nepal speak to India through its agony what India has refused to hear?

The Himalaya are not a series of silos – Afghanistan Hindu Kush Himalaya, Pakistan Himalaya, Indian Himalaya, Nepal Himalaya, the Himalaya in Tibet-China, Bhutan. To employ a powerful term I have heard Vadodara-based painter Gulam Mohammed Sheikh use for the Elephanta Caves, the Himalaya are one living rock, silently, broodingly, tense with seismic voltages, glacial stirrings and geological turbulence.

And they spell their uncoded thought in swipes no one can foretell. When, where exactly, with what ferocity, no one knows. And what disasters may radiate from them – through rivers plucked from their courses, rockfalls and landslides depositing mud and silt, turning human habitations into rubble and fertile farms into slime – no one can precisely envision.

Ask those who have heard from their parents and grandparents of the Nepal-Bihar earthquake of 1934 or the Assam temblor of 1950. They will speak of the nightmare.

The question of preparedness

The world has been told – India has specifically been warned – by seismologists of an impending earthquake of humungous scale with the potential of a cataclysm across a great swathe of northern India which lies under the quake-shadow of the Himalaya. It is not as if India's government has declined to heed the warning. It has done much, as its disaster management agencies will rightly assure us, to be alert to the risk.

But after 26/8 what we need to ask and know is: should what happened in upper Nepal have



Gopalkrishna Gandhi

Former administrator who has held diplomatic and constitutional offices

One living rock, shared by nations, makes its dangers a shared concern for all

happened in lower Nepal, and even lower than that, would our 'preparedness' have sufficed to save riverside habitations from instant death?

More pertinently, we need to ask and know whether the absolutely fearsome phenomenon of global warming triggered GLOFs (or Glacial Lake Outburst Floods), has led authorities to warn people living in potential GLOF-affected areas in India of the danger they face and advised them on how to face it.

We are, let us face it, in seismic, glacial, climatological and geological innocence.

By 'we' I mean we the people of India. Our earth scientists know it all but their *jnana* is clasped tight in their *acharya-mushti-s* ('knowledge kept in the teacher's fist').

What happened in Nepal on that stricken Wednesday is yet to be fully appraised. We will soon enough know whether it was an earthquake that caused the GLOF, or whether the GLOF resulted in the earth quaking and waterbodies swelling as they never have before.

Whatever happened, India must learn

Be the sequence as it may, the following lessons scream to be learnt by India.

First, the Himalaya, held sacred since memory has served, gestate 'sure-shot' danger.

Second, these dangers can now no longer be left to be unravelled in seminars and technical papers.

Third, they have to be made known on a war footing to us, the clear potential victims.

Fourth, and not just made known as in increasing our knowledge but made known as in making us part of a new safeguarding.

Fifth, our scholar-diplomat Shyam Saran has, in two timely and telling articles in *The Tribune* ("China's hydel project bodes ill for India", July 14, 2026) and *The Indian Express* ("From Nepal to

Uttarakhand and China, the mountains are warning us", August 28, 2026), explained how China's construction of Medog, the world's largest hydropower project, at the great bend of the Brahmaputra river just across the border and very close to the Paizhen Fault, could (should there be a major earthquake in the project's vicinity), cause a massive discharge of floodwaters and debris into India's northeast. India's salutary initiatives to bring about a measure of mature civility on the borders with China must now include frankness about the ferocious danger that Medog poses.

Sixth, an urgent review of India's own built hazards such as dams and reactors in the high risk zones followed by the dismantling of the real 'baddies' can no longer be postponed.

Seventh, and no less difficult but no less important, a calibrated but time-bound decongestion of human agglomerations in high-risk zones.

Eighth, if surgical strikes can be used with precision and without excesses against an external enemy to good effect, their civilian equivalent should be deployed to disable that which, though intended for our well-being, has become a danger.

Progress and danger

Marjorie Sykes was a British devotee of India, in the tradition of C.F. Andrews, Verrier Elwin and J.B.S. Haldane. I once heard her say with passion: "Dams are a damnation." All dams may not be, but some, depending on their location, are. Likewise, some reactors can become rakshasas. And some commercial behemoths, predatory.

A big and great nation can learn from the experience of a small neighbour. Especially when both are perched on the same living rock that threatens to turn into a mass grave.

GS Paper III: Disaster Management

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Questions: "The Himalayas are a zone of continuing tectonic activity rather than a static mountain system." Explain its implications for human settlements and infrastructure. (10Marks, 150 Words)

Context :

The excerpt from Gopalkrishna Gandhi's article, "Nepal's agony, the Himalayan warning to India" (published following ecological and seismic triggers in Nepal), addresses the shared, transboundary vulnerabilities of the Himalayan ecosystem. It serves as a stark warning to India against ecological innocence, unplanned infrastructure proliferation, and geopolitical apathy toward shared natural hazards like Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) and seismic shifts.

Comprehensive Analysis

1. Transboundary & Ecosystem Continuity

- **Living Rock Concept:** The Himalayas operate as an integrated, geologically active continuous belt (spanning Afghanistan's Hindu Kush to the Eastern Himalayas), rather than isolated political silos.
- **Cascading Hazards:** Seismic activity and climatological events in upstream regions (Nepal, Tibet/China) directly trigger downstream catastrophes (landslides, river course alterations, GLOFs, siltation) in India.

2. Infrastructure Vulnerability & "Built Hazards"

- **Ecological Maladaptation:** Unplanned construction of massive dams, mega-hydropower projects, and heavy urbanization destabilizes fragile mountain slopes.
- **Transboundary Water Risks:** The Medog Hydropower Project (China) near the Great Bend of the Yarlung Zangbo (Brahmaputra) and the Paizhen Fault poses severe flash flood and structural collapse hazards for India's Northeast during seismic events.
- **The "Damnation" Dilemma:** Run-of-the-river projects and high-dam reservoirs act as force multipliers for natural disasters in high-risk seismic zones (Zones IV & V).

3. Asymmetry in Disaster Governance & Science Communication

- **"Acharya-Mushti" (Knowledge Monopoly):** Earth science data, risk modeling, and early warnings remain confined to academic circles rather than being operationalized for public awareness and grassroots capacity building.
- **Lack of Community Preparedness:** Downstream, riverside habitations lack localized evacuation drills, real-time warning systems, and risk-informed spatial planning.

Key Takeaways & Actionable Lessons for India

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- **Democratize Earth Sciences:** Translate complex geological and GLOF risk data into actionable, localized community-level warning systems on a war footing.
- **De-risk Built Infrastructure:** Conduct urgent safety audits of existing dams and nuclear assets in fragile ecological zones, followed by the decommissioning of unsafe structures.
- **Environmental Diplomacy:** Engage China and Nepal in transparent transboundary hydrological data-sharing mechanisms, specifically regarding mega-projects near active faults (e.g., Medog Project).
- **Calibrated De-urbanization:** Implement time-bound spatial planning and decongestion of high-risk Himalayan habitations to prevent mass casualties.

Static & Multidisciplinary Dimensions

Physical Geography

- **Plate Tectonics & Orogeny:** Ongoing collision of the Indian and Eurasian plates creates intense seismic voltage along major fault lines (Main Boundary Thrust, Main Central Thrust).
- **Glacial Geomorphology:** Accelerated retreat of Himalayan glaciers forms unstable moraine-dammed lakes prone to GLOFs.

International Relations & Governance

- **Hydro-Diplomacy:** Need for bilateral/multilateral water-sharing and hazard-warning treaties (India-China-Nepal).
- **Policy Gap:** Need to shift governance from reactive relief management to proactive structural risk reduction.

Environment, Disaster Management & Security

- **Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR):** Aligning Himalayan development with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030).
- **Climate Resilient Infrastructure:** Re-evaluating environmental impact assessments (EIA) for eco-sensitive Himalayan zones.

Structural Disaster Risk Flow (Step-by-Step Chain)

1. **Trigger Phase:** Global Warming / Seismic Shift on Himalayan Fault Lines
2. **Intermediate Impact:** Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs) & Mass Landslides

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3. **Cascading Hazard:** River Blockage, Mudslides, and Dam Overtopping / Breach
4. **Downstream Disaster:** Sudden Debris Flow, Destructive Flooding of Riverine Habitations
5. **Mitigation Strategy:** Early Warning Systems → Structural Audits → Community Evacuation Plans

Conclusion

The Himalayas operate not as political borders, but as a single, dynamic, and fragile ecosystem. India's approach to Himalayan development must evolve from aggressive resource extraction to ecologically sensitive stewardship. Mitigating transboundary disaster risks requires bridging the gap between scientific consensus and public policy, auditing built hazards, and initiating active hydro-diplomacy with neighboring nations before natural alerts turn into regional catastrophes.