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Parliamentary system in India

UPSC PYQ analysis - Polity



India's coffee exports reached a record \$2.136 billion in FY26, driven primarily by higher global prices and improved per-unit realisation, even as volume growth remained modest (~5%). Strong international demand, supply constraints in major producing countries, and a shift toward value-added coffee supported export growth, with Europe continuing as the dominant market.

EDITORIALS DECODED

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Arrest the grief

Impacts of illegal sand mining in central India



Don't overlook concern among children



Freebies unplugged

How welfarism is shaped through freebie culture

Nine policemen are sentenced to death in T.N. custodial murder case

A trial court in Tamil Nadu has awarded the death penalty to nine police personnel for custodial torture and murder in the 2020 Sattankulam case. The victims, a trader and his son, were detained for alleged lockdown violations. The case, investigated by the Central Bureau of Investigation, became a major issue of civil liberties and police accountability.

Case Background and Findings

The victims were unlawfully detained and subjected to repeated custodial torture, leading to their deaths. The court held that the acts were deliberate, amounting to criminal conspiracy and “vengeance,” despite the victims having no prior criminal record. Evidence indicated attempts to destroy proof, including cleaning of bloodstains and filing of false cases.

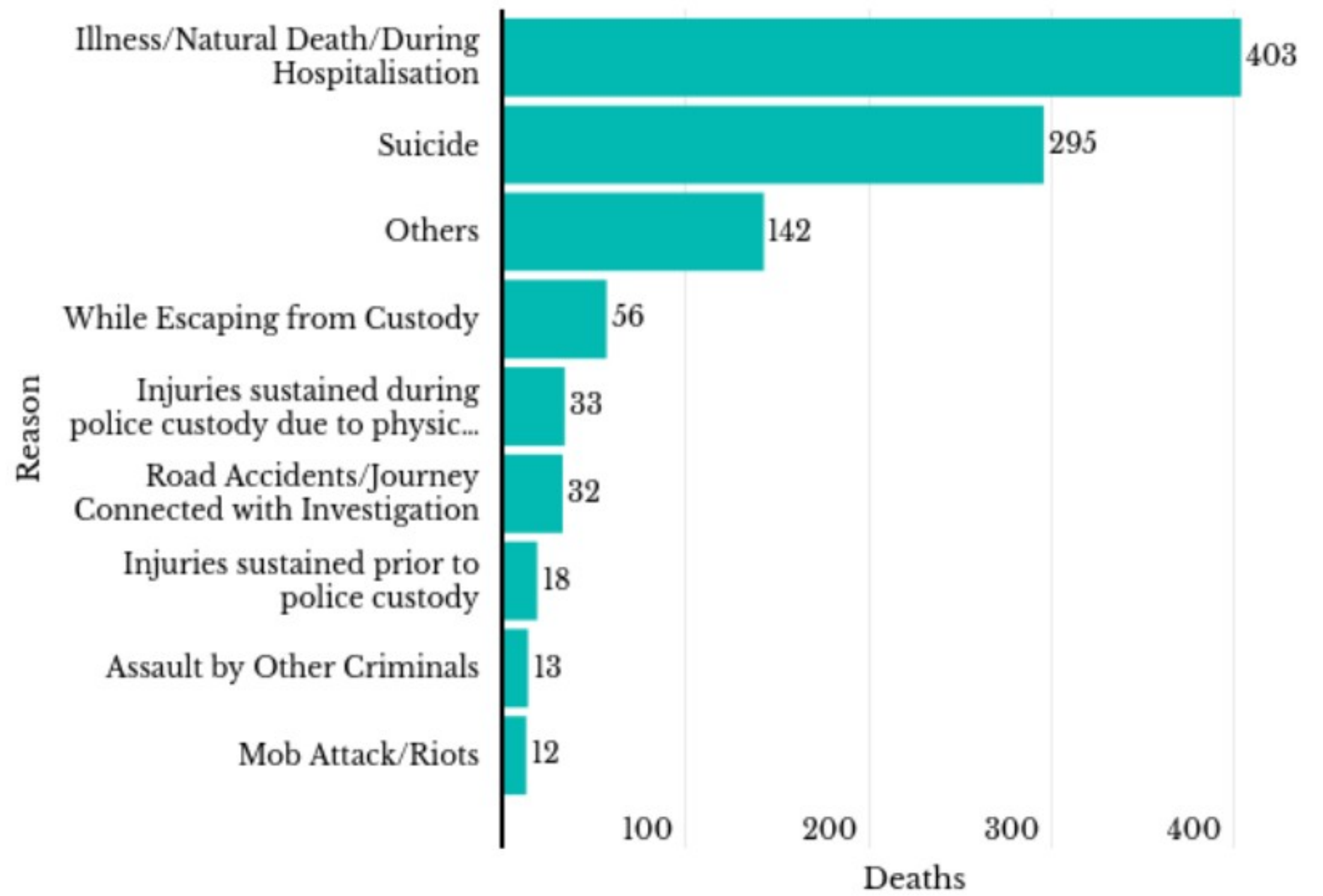


Judicial Observations and Verdict

The court described **custodial deaths** as a “**social evil**” and an attack on human rights, emphasising that authority must be exercised with responsibility. It held all accused equally culpable and imposed the maximum punishment to act as a deterrent. A fine exceeding ₹1 crore was also levied.

Legal and Institutional Context

Custodial violence violates fundamental rights under Article 21 and has been repeatedly addressed in judicial precedents like *D.K. Basu vs State of West Bengal*, which laid down safeguards against police abuse. However, gaps in enforcement continue to persist.



Source: Crime in India reports 2010-19, National Crime Records Bureau

National Trends and Data

According to Ministry of Home Affairs data, custodial deaths remain a concern. 170 deaths were reported in the first 74 days of the current year, exceeding the previous year's total of 140. States like Bihar (19), Rajasthan (18), and Uttar Pradesh (15) reported the highest numbers. While overall figures declined from 176 (2021-22) to 140 (last year), recent trends indicate a resurgence.

Implications for Governance and Society

The case underscores systemic issues in policing, including misuse of power, weak accountability, and erosion of public trust. Persistent custodial violence reflects institutional deficiencies despite legal safeguards, raising concerns over rule of law and human rights protection.

Conclusion and Way Forward

The verdict signals judicial intent to deter custodial crimes, but sustainable reform requires strengthening police accountability, ensuring strict implementation of safeguards, and improving institutional oversight. Addressing both structural and behavioural aspects of policing is essential to prevent recurrence.

Shielding 'choice' from 'honour'

Recent policy actions reflect contrasting approaches to marriage autonomy in India. While Gujarat has proposed requiring parental disclosure for marriage registration, Karnataka has enacted the Freedom of Choice in Marriage and Prevention of Crimes in the Name of Honour and Tradition Bill, 2026, focusing on protecting individual choice, especially in inter-caste marriages.

Background: Honour-Based Violence

Honour-related crimes stem from social norms linked to caste, family, and tradition. Karnataka witnessed 15 such crimes in the past five years, including a notable 2025 case involving the killing of an inter-caste couple member. These incidents highlight persistent social resistance to individual marital choice.

Key Features of the Karnataka Law

The law explicitly states that consent of parents or community is not required for marriage between consenting adults. It criminalises honour-based violence, including killings and social boycotts, prescribing penalties such as a minimum five-year imprisonment.



Institutional Safeguards & Support Mechanisms

The Bill provides for time-bound police protection (within six hours), establishment of safe houses in each district, legal aid, and NGO support. It also proposes special cells and a 24-hour helpline ("Eva Nammava Vedike") for counselling and facilitation of marriages.

Individual Autonomy vs Social Control

The legislation reinforces constitutional values of liberty, dignity, and personal choice. However, it also reflects ongoing tensions between individual rights and entrenched social structures like caste and patriarchy, which continue to influence marriage decisions.

Challenges and Implementation Concerns

Despite legal provisions, effectiveness depends on enforcement. Existing laws have not fully curbed such crimes, indicating institutional gaps and societal resistance. Ambiguities remain regarding coordination among agencies and protection in interfaith marriages.

Legal Framework to Address Honour Killings in India

Honour killings are prosecuted under general criminal law provisions, as there is no standalone legislation addressing such crimes.

- **Murder (Section 302 IPC / Section 103 BNS):** Honour killings are treated as premeditated murder, punishable with death or life imprisonment.
- **Attempt to Murder (Section 307 IPC / Section 109 BNS):** Applies in cases where the act is attempted but not completed.
- **Criminal Conspiracy (Section 120B IPC / Section 61 BNS):** Relevant as such crimes often involve collective planning by family or community members.

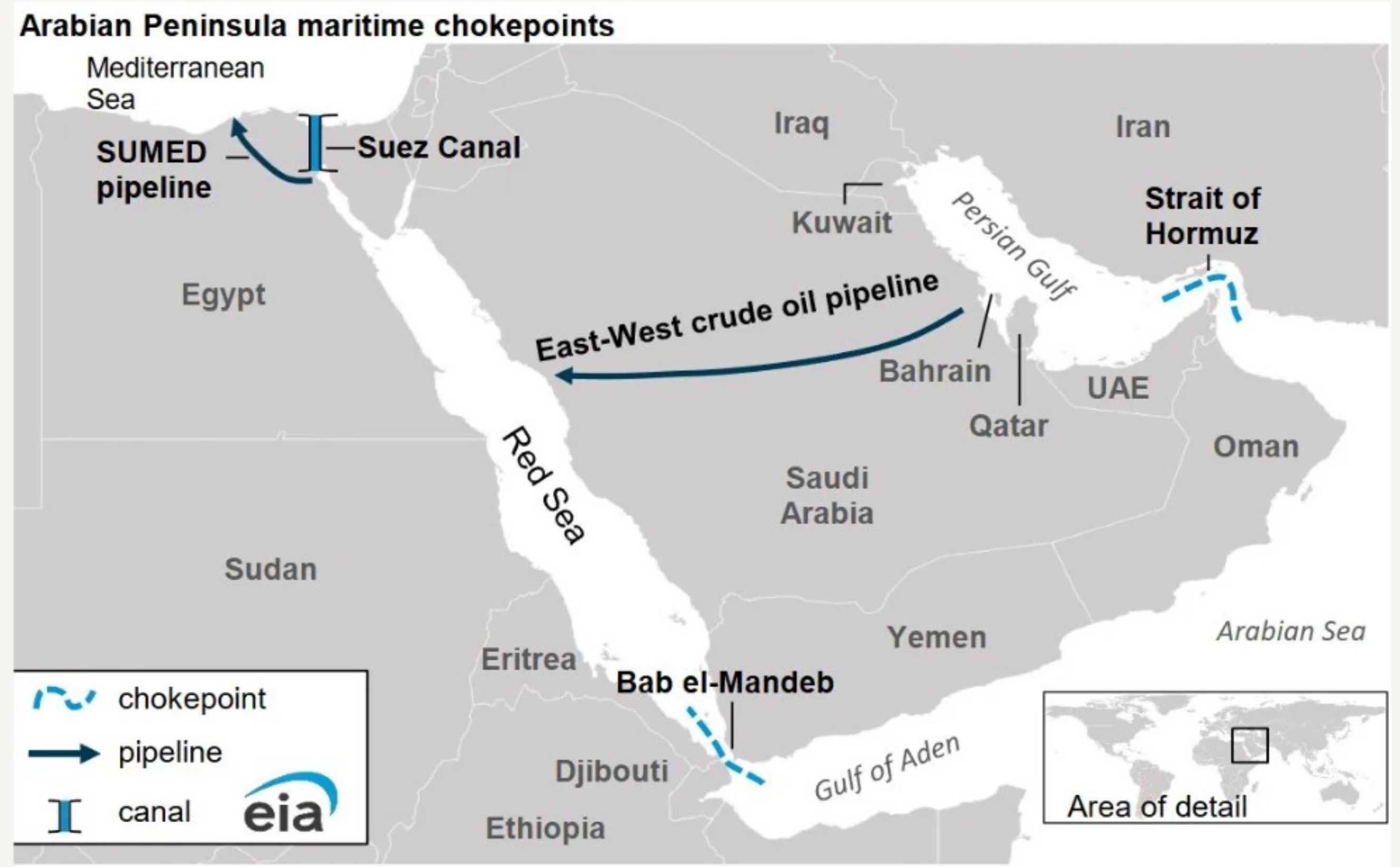
These provisions ensure that both direct perpetrators and those involved in planning or abetment are held accountable, reflecting a stringent legal stance against honour-based violence.

Conclusion and Way Forward

The law marks a step toward safeguarding personal freedoms, but requires strong implementation, awareness, and institutional accountability. Broader reforms addressing social attitudes and ensuring uniform protection across inter-caste and interfaith contexts are essential for meaningful impact.

What the China-Pakistan peace plan for West Asia says about China's stakes and global trade

Amid disruptions in West Asia due to ongoing conflict, China and Pakistan have proposed a joint peace initiative focusing on ceasefire, protection of shipping routes, and dialogue through multilateral platforms like the United Nations. This marks a shift toward a more active, though cautious, diplomatic role by China in crisis management.



Key Features of the Peace Proposal

The plan outlines a five-point framework emphasising de-escalation, humanitarian access, and respect for sovereignty. It is primarily aimed at stabilising maritime routes and preventing escalation, rather than offering a comprehensive political resolution.

China's Strategic Stakes in West Asia

China has significant economic and energy interests in the region. It is a major importer of oil from countries like Iran and Saudi Arabia, and depends on key chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz. Its investments in connectivity projects, including routes through Pakistan's Gwadar port, further deepen its regional stakes.

Drivers Behind China's Intervention

China's move is driven by concerns over disrupted trade flows, rising shipping costs, and supply chain instability. Blockages in Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb have affected energy supplies and exports to Europe. The initiative also reflects China's intent to expand diplomatic influence as the U.S. recalibrates its regional role.

China's initiative reflects an attempt to position itself as a leader of the Global South. By partnering with Pakistan and emphasizing sovereignty, multilateralism, and non-Western diplomacy, China is expanding its influence beyond economics into political leadership. This move aligns with a broader shift where non-Western actors seek greater roles in conflict resolution.

Global Trade and Geopolitical Implications

Disruptions in key maritime routes have increased freight costs, delayed shipments, and created uncertainty in global markets. The situation highlights the vulnerability of global supply chains and the growing role of non-Western actors in shaping geopolitical outcomes.

Economic Slowdown and Energy Demand

China's experience with the Malacca Dilemma—its earlier overdependence on the Strait of Malacca for energy and trade—served as a critical turning point in recognising the risks posed by maritime chokepoints. In response, China actively diversified its energy sources, developed overland pipelines, and expanded strategic reserves to reduce vulnerability.

Way Forward

China's relative resilience stems from a combination of strategic reserves, diversified supply routes, proactive energy transition, and moderated demand. The case underscores the importance of long-term planning, energy diversification, and technological adoption for insulating economies against global energy disruptions. India can learn from this model and strengthen resilience by accelerating strategic petroleum reserves, investing in alternative supply routes, and scaling up EV adoption and renewable energy.

The Indian EXPRESS

Don't overlook cancer among children

India's paediatric cancer burden remains significant, with high mortality and an estimated 50,000–75,000 new cases annually. Despite many childhood cancers being treatable, survival outcomes remain uneven due to gaps in early detection, weak surveillance, and concentration of specialised care in urban centres. Delayed diagnosis, financial and logistical barriers, and treatment discontinuation further worsen outcomes. At the same time, evidence indicates that timely diagnosis and uninterrupted treatment can substantially improve survival rates. Addressing the burden requires integrating paediatric oncology into national cancer strategies, strengthening primary healthcare capacity for early detection, expanding decentralised treatment infrastructure, and improving data systems.

Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial

"Despite the treatable nature of many childhood cancers, outcomes in India remain uneven."

Discuss the challenges in addressing paediatric cancer burden in India and suggest measures to ensure equitable access to early diagnosis and effective treatment.



Arrest the grief

Illegal sand mining in the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary threatens a fragile riverine ecosystem. Despite judicial bans, organised mining networks have exploited jurisdictional gaps across states, aided by weak enforcement and administrative inaction. Attempts by states to legalise limited mining within the sanctuary have faced judicial resistance, highlighting tensions between environmental protection and economic pressures. At the same time, local socio-economic conditions complicate enforcement, as limited livelihood options in the Chambal ravines push communities towards mining activities. While judicial intervention has sought to enforce accountability, sustainable resolution requires a balanced approach that combines effective regulation with livelihood alternatives and consistent, impartial enforcement to address both ecological and socio-economic dimensions.

Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial

"Illegal sand mining in ecologically sensitive regions reflects a conflict between environmental conservation, governance, and livelihood concerns."

Examine the challenges in regulating illegal mining in protected areas and discuss the limitations of enforcement-centric approaches in ensuring sustainable and equitable outcomes.

thehindu **businessline.**

TUESDAY - MARCH 31, 2026

Freebies unplugged

The increasing use of welfare "freebies" by political parties, particularly in the form of unconditional cash transfers and subsidies, reflects a growing trend in electoral politics. While such measures can enhance short-term consumption, food security, and income stability, they also place a fiscal burden on states that are already facing revenue deficits. Concerns arise over their impact on resource allocation, as these expenditures may divert funds from long-term asset creation, while also influencing electoral fairness through competitive populism. At the same time, not all welfare measures yield uniform outcomes. Evidence suggests that unconditional transfers have limited impact on long-term indicators such as nutrition, education, and sustained poverty reduction. More effective interventions tend to be those linked to human development outcomes or essential services. This highlights the need to recalibrate welfare policies towards ensuring that social spending contributes to durable developmental gains.

Editorial to Exam - Most probable question from this editorial

"Rising reliance on welfare 'freebies' has significant implications for fiscal sustainability and development outcomes."

Discuss the impact of such measures on governance and public expenditure, and examine the need for reforms to ensure long-term developmental gains.

India's outreach to Angola will contain energy risk

Disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have exposed vulnerabilities in India's energy imports, with nearly 90% of LPG routes and about 50% of LNG demand affected. This has prompted India to reassess its overdependence on West Asia and explore alternative supply sources, notably Angola.

Key Development: India-Angola Energy Engagement

Indian energy firms such as Indian Oil Corporation, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited, and GAIL are negotiating with Sonangol for short-term LPG and long-term LNG contracts (up to 10 years). Angola, with 4.6 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves, is already India's fifth-largest LNG supplier, exporting \$924 million worth in FY25.



Strategic Rationale: From Crisis Response to Diversification

While the immediate trigger is reduced supply from Qatar and United Arab Emirates, the shift reflects a broader move toward structured and diversified sourcing. Angola offers logistical advantages, including 10–15 days shorter transit compared to North America, reducing supply delays and costs for critical sectors like fertilizers and steel.

India's outreach to Angola reflects a structural recalibration of its energy strategy in response to global disruptions. While West Asia will remain important, diversifying toward Africa can reduce systemic risks and ensure supply continuity. Expanding such partnerships across African producers, coupled with investments in upstream assets and logistics, will be key to building a resilient and balanced energy import framework.

Impact on India-Africa Trade Dynamics

India-Africa trade, currently valued at \$90–100 billion, has remained shallow in composition. Increased LNG imports from Angola could:

- Shift 5–10% of energy imports away from West Asia
- Create stable, long-term trade flows worth billions through decade-long contracts
- Encourage Indian investment in upstream energy assets, moving beyond a buyer-seller relationship

This could deepen economic ties and expand cooperation in infrastructure, shipping, and engineering.

Competitive Advantages of India

African gas may be costlier than supplies from traditional partners, increasing short-term import costs. However, the crisis highlights that cost efficiency alone is insufficient without supply security. India is thus moving toward a risk-adjusted strategy, prioritising diversification over lowest-cost sourcing.

Implications for Energy Security and Strategy

The new Angola connection effectively :

- Reduces excessive geographic concentration of imports
- Enhances resilience against geopolitical chokepoints
- Strengthens long-term supply stability through contracts
- Opens avenues for overseas energy investments

This marks a shift from reactive procurement to strategic energy planning.

Conclusion and Way Forward

India's outreach to Angola reflects a structural recalibration of its energy strategy in response to global disruptions. While West Asia will remain important, diversifying toward Africa can reduce systemic risks and ensure supply continuity. Expanding such partnerships across African producers, coupled with investments in upstream assets and logistics, will be key to building a resilient and balanced energy import framework.

Kalpakkam fast breeder reactor attains criticality

India's nuclear programme reached a key milestone with the indigenous Fast Breeder Reactor (FBR) at Kalpakkam attaining criticality. This marks the start of a self-sustaining nuclear fission reaction in the 500 MWe reactor, signalling readiness for power generation and strengthening the second stage of India's three-stage nuclear programme.

India's Three-Stage Nuclear Programme

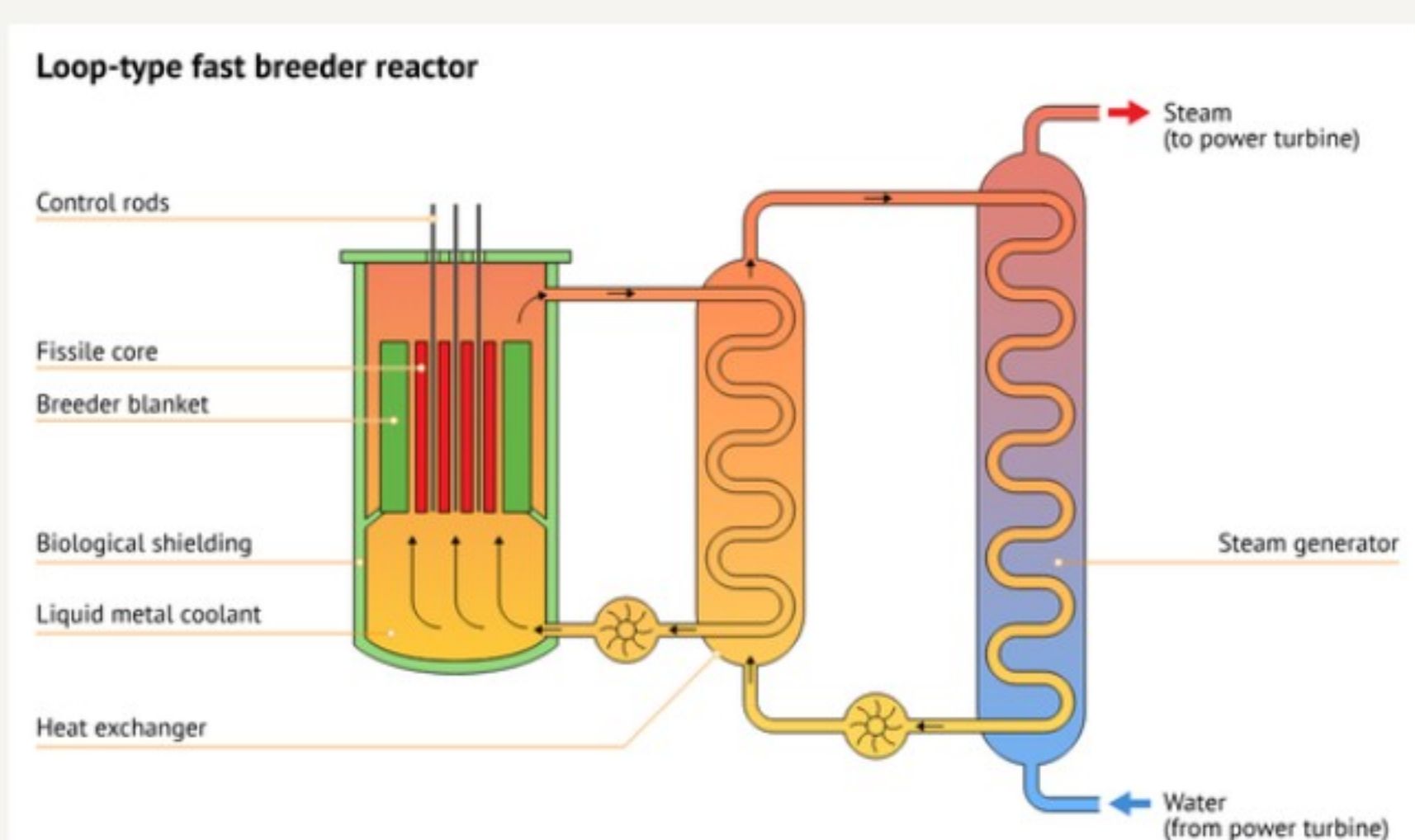
India follows a unique three-stage nuclear strategy to utilise its limited uranium and abundant thorium reserves:

- Stage 1: Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) using natural uranium
- Stage 2: Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs) producing more fuel than consumed
- Stage 3: Thorium-based reactors using Uranium-233

This sequential model ensures long-term energy security by converting "fertile" materials into usable nuclear fuel.

Stage 1: PHWR Dominance

PHWRs form the backbone of India's current nuclear capacity (8,180 MWe). These reactors use natural uranium and heavy water, with fuel supply boosted by the India-US nuclear deal. They generate plutonium (Pu-239), which is essential for the next stage.



The operationalisation of Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs) represents a critical step in advancing India's long-term energy strategy by reducing dependence on imported uranium and enabling greater energy self-reliance through efficient utilisation of domestic resources, particularly thorium. It also supports the clean energy transition while strengthening indigenous technological capabilities in the nuclear sector. With India poised to become only the second country after Russia to operate a commercial FBR, this milestone underscores its strategic and technological progress. Going forward, sustained focus on expanding reactor capacity, developing robust fuel cycle infrastructure, and investing in advanced reactor technologies will be essential to fully realise the potential of a secure, sustainable, and self-reliant nuclear energy programme.



Stage 2: Role of Fast Breeder Reactors

FBRs act as the critical link in the programme. Using uranium-plutonium mixed oxide (MOX) fuel, they produce more fissile material than they consume through nuclear transmutation. They also enable:

- Expansion of plutonium inventory (produced from stage I)
- Conversion of Uranium-238 and Thorium-232 into fissile materials
- Up to 60 times more energy extraction from uranium

India's prototype 500 MWe FBR at Kalpakkam, built by **Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Ltd (BHAVINI)**, is a major step, with plans for additional reactors.

Stage 3: Thorium-Based Future

India possesses vast thorium reserves, especially in coastal sands. Thorium (Th-232) is converted into fissile Uranium-233 (U-233), enabling sustainable and long-term nuclear power generation. Advanced reactor designs like molten salt reactors (MSRs) are envisioned for this stage.

Fuel Cycle and Technological Approach

India follows a closed fuel cycle, involving reprocessing of spent fuel to extract usable isotopes like Pu-239 and U-233. This enhances fuel efficiency and reduces waste. Recent proposals also explore using PHWRs with advanced fuels (e.g., HALEU) to accelerate thorium utilisation.

PRELIMS CORNER :

1) Consider the following statements:
(2013)

1. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha are not the Members of that House.

2. While the nominated members of the two Houses of the Parliament have no voting right in the Presidential election, they have the right to vote in the election of the Vice President. Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

2) Consider the following statements:
(2013)

The Parliamentary Committee on Public Accounts (PAC)

1. Consists of not more than 25 Members of the Lok Sabha.

2. Scrutinises appropriation and finance accounts of Government. 3. Examine the report of CAG.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

**PRELIMS 2026
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AROUND THE WORLD

Bolsa Família



Bolsa Família demonstrates how well-designed welfare policies can balance social protection with long-term human development. Introduced in 2003, it targets low-income families through conditional cash transfers linked to health and education outcomes. Benefits vary by family composition, prioritising children and adolescents, and are delivered directly via bank accounts using a unified database (Cadastro Único). With a modest fiscal cost of about 0.5% of GDP, the programme has achieved measurable outcomes—reducing infant mortality linked to malnutrition and disease by over 50% and improving school retention rates.

This model contrasts with the growing trend of unconditional welfare transfers or “freebies,” which often focus on short-term consumption without durable developmental impact. While such measures can provide immediate relief, they may strain public finances and divert resources from productive investments. In contrast, Bolsa Família’s conditional design ensures that public spending translates into improved human capital.

For India, where welfare spending is extensive but often fragmented, key lessons include better targeting through integrated databases, linking benefits to health and education outcomes, and maintaining fiscal discipline. Strengthening conditional and outcome-oriented transfers can enhance both efficiency and equity, ensuring that welfare policies contribute to sustained poverty reduction rather than short-term gains.

Prelims Corner: Explanations

1) The correct answer is (b) 2 only.
Statement 1 is incorrect. The Chairman of the Rajya Sabha is the Vice President of India, who is not a member of the House. However, the Deputy Chairman is elected from among the members of the Rajya Sabha, and therefore must be a member. Hence, the statement is wrong.
Statement 2 is correct. Nominated members of Parliament do not participate in the Presidential election (Article 54), but they are allowed to vote in the Vice Presidential election (Article 66).
Thus, only Statement 2 is correct.

Chairman of Rajya Sabha

The presiding officer of the Rajya Sabha is known as the Chairman. The vice-president of India is the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. During any period when the Vice President acts as President or discharges the functions of the President, he does not perform the duties of the office of the Chairman of Rajya Sabha. The Chairman of the Rajya Sabha can be removed from his office only if he is removed from the office of the Vice-President. As a presiding officer, the powers and functions of the Chairman in the Rajya Sabha are similar to those of the Speaker in the Lok Sabha. Unlike the Speaker (who is a member of the House), the Chairman is not a member of the House. The Vice-President cannot preside over a sitting of the Rajya Sabha as its Chairman when a resolution for his removal is under consideration. However, he can be present and speak in the House and can take part in its proceedings, without voting, even at such a time (while the Speaker can vote in the first instance when a resolution for his removal is under consideration of the Lok Sabha).

2) The correct answer is (b)
Statement 1 is incorrect: The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) consists of 22 members—15 from the Lok Sabha and 7 from the Rajya Sabha, not 25 members of the Lok Sabha alone.
Statement 2 is correct: The PAC scrutinizes appropriation accounts and finance accounts of the government to ensure they align with parliamentary grants.
Statement 3 is correct: The PAC examines the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) to ensure financial accountability.

Public Accounts Committee

This committee was set up first in 1921 under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1919 and has since been in existence. The members are elected by the Parliament every year from amongst its members according to the principle of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.

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