

P2. NATIONAL



Supreme Court considers SOP to hear urgent life and liberty cases after working hours - The Supreme Court is examining an SOP to enable timely judicial access in urgent matters involving life and personal liberty beyond regular court hours.

P3. NATIONAL



India discusses agricultural collaboration with Taliban government of Afghanistan - The draft policy seeks to build a coordinated, outcome-oriented health research ecosystem aligned with India's disease burden and public health priorities.

P6. ECONOMICS



Amid new US tariff plan, Centre bars import of goods using forced labour - India amended the Foreign Trade Policy to prohibit imports produced through forced labour, aligning its trade framework with international labour standards amid global scrutiny.

P7. ECONOMICS



U.S., U.K., and 12 other nations reaffirm 2016 ruling invalidating China's claims in South China Sea - MoSPI introduced the Index of Services Production as a high-frequency indicator to measure short-term growth in India's formal services sector.

Editor's Note

This edition of Pala Civil Times brings together a range of developments that highlight the intersection of governance, law, economy, public health and international relations. The Supreme Court features prominently with discussions on evolving a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for hearing urgent cases involving life and personal liberty beyond regular court hours, alongside its interim approach in the Bhojshala-Kamal Maula Mosque dispute, reflecting the balance between constitutional rights and public order. In public policy, the Draft National Health Research Policy, 2026 proposes a coordinated research ecosystem aligned with India's disease burden, while the Index of Services Production (ISP) marks a significant statistical reform to better measure the country's largest economic sector. India's decision to prohibit imports produced through forced labour demonstrates the growing influence of global trade standards on domestic policy. The issue also examines the expansion of protections for acid attack victims under the RPwD Act, and the strengthening of strategic partnerships with Australia and New Zealand under India's broader Indo-Pacific vision. Together, these developments offer valuable insights into the evolving policy landscape and their relevance for UPSC preparation.

Editorials Decoded

 The Indian EXPRESS

Rising inflation complicates RBI's choice



India amended the Foreign Trade Policy to prohibit imports produced through forced labour, aligning its trade framework with international labour standards amid global scrutiny.

THE HINDU

Steady in turbulence



The prime ministerial visit strengthened India's Indo-Pacific strategy by expanding defence, maritime and economic partnerships with Australia and New Zealand.

Supreme Court considers SOP to hear urgent life and liberty cases after working hours



The Supreme Court has agreed to examine the feasibility of framing a **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)** to facilitate access to constitutional courts during non-working hours in urgent matters involving life and personal liberty. The plea relied on **Article 32(4) of the Constitution**, which provides that the *right to move the Supreme Court for the enforcement of Fundamental Rights shall not be suspended except as otherwise provided by the Constitution*, arguing that effective access to constitutional remedies should not be constrained by court working hours in genuinely urgent situations. While issuing notice to the High Courts, the Court invited suggestions for a practical SOP and observed that any framework must be capable of effective implementation rather than remaining a mere procedural announcement.

The Court also recognised that expanding after-hours access raises important concerns regarding judicial administration and misuse of urgent listings. It noted that courts already possess the ability to hear exceptional matters outside regular hours, but a structured mechanism would require objective criteria to distinguish genuine emergencies from contrived claims of urgency. The Bench indicated that any future SOP may appropriately be confined to cases involving life and personal liberty, with safeguards to prevent abuse while strengthening access to justice, one of the core constitutional values underpinning the right to constitutional remedies under Article 32 and the broader framework of judicial protection of Fundamental Rights.

RELEVANCE

GS II : Indian Polity - Judiciary

Supreme Court brings survivors of forcible acid ingestion under Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act

The Union Government has amended the Schedule to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016 to expand the definition of an 'acid attack victim' to include persons who suffer internal injuries due to the ingestion or administration of acid or other similar corrosive substances. The amendment, notified on 22 May 2026, aligns the Act with Section 124 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which recognises both acid throwing and forcible administration of acid as offences punishable with imprisonment of not less than ten years, which may extend to imprisonment for life, along with a fine sufficient to meet the victim's medical expenses. The revised definition has been given retrospective effect, enabling victims who sustained such injuries before the amendment to claim benefits available under the RPwD Act.

The amendment follows the Supreme Court's intervention under Article 142 of the Constitution, through which it had temporarily extended the protection of the RPwD Act to survivors of forcible acid ingestion to prevent the exclusion of similarly placed victims. During the proceedings, the Court also highlighted the need for a comprehensive policy framework recognising that acid attack survivors often require long-term medical treatment, rehabilitation and social support. The development reflects an effort to harmonise disability law with criminal law while ensuring a more inclusive and rights-based approach towards victims of acid violence.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. 'Constitutionally guaranteed judicial independence is a prerequisite of democracy.' Comment. (GS II- 2023)

Q. Though the Human Rights Commissions have contributed immensely to the protection of human rights in India, yet they have failed to assert themselves against the mighty and powerful. Analysing their structural and practical limitations, suggest remedial measures. (GS II - 2021)

Bhojshala–Kamal Maula Mosque Dispute

Why in News? The Supreme Court declined to restore the status quo ante after the Madhya Pradesh High Court declared the Bhojshala–Kamal Maula Mosque complex in Dhar as a temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati and barred Friday namaaz at the site. Instead, it issued interim directions to preserve peace until the matter is finally decided.

Supreme Court's Interim Directions

- Refused to restore the previous arrangement, observing that doing so could create tension in a highly sensitive dispute.
- Directed the Government of Madhya Pradesh to identify an alternative open space near the disputed site for the Muslim community to offer Friday namaaz (1 PM–3 PM) as an interim measure.
- Restrained the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) from permitting any structural alterations to the disputed monument without the prior approval of the Supreme Court.
- Agreed to hear the appeals on a day-to-day basis for an early resolution.

Key Issues Raised Before the Court

- The appellants sought restoration of the earlier arrangement, arguing that the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991 was enacted to prevent changes to the religious character of places of worship.
- The dispute involves contested historical facts, that the ASI reports relied upon by the High Court had not been tested through cross-examination, and that joint worship had continued under a 1995 arrangement.
- The government submitted that peace had been maintained after the High Court judgment and opposed interim interference.

Background

On 15 May 2026, the Madhya Pradesh High Court held that the disputed Bhojshala–Kamal Maula Mosque complex is a temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, quashed the ASI's earlier order permitting Friday namaaz. The Hindu community regards Bhojshala as a temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, while the Muslim community identifies the 11th-century monument as the Kamal Maula Mosque. The disputed complex is a protected monument under the ASI.

India's Measures for the Safety of Seafarers Amid the West Asia Crisis

Following repeated attacks on merchant vessels in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways convened an inter-ministerial meeting to strengthen the protection and welfare of Indian seafarers operating in the region.

Key Measures Decided

- **Comprehensive Operational Dashboard:** The DGS will establish a real-time dashboard to track every Indian seafarer on every vessel, irrespective of its flag, including vessel location, cargo, crew details, threat assessment, voyage plan and the availability of essential supplies and communication facilities.
- **Dedicated Liaison Officer:** A single-point liaison officer will assist the families of every Indian seafarer who is killed or injured by coordinating medical care, repatriation, welfare benefits, wages, contractual entitlements and compensation.
- **Real-Time Inter-Agency Coordination:** The Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways will coordinate with the MEA, Indian Navy, DGS, Indian Missions and other maritime stakeholders for continuous monitoring and emergency response.
- **Mission-Based Support Abroad:** Indian Missions in affected countries will provide verified information on navigational safety, safe routes, port facilities, medical evacuation, repatriation and ongoing investigations.
- **Enhanced Vessel Safety Protocols:** Vessel movement through the affected region will be based on fresh threat assessments, the Master's professional judgement and coordination with maritime authorities.
- **Compliance by Shipping Companies:** Shipowners, vessel managers and RPSL agencies must ensure that Indian seafarers are not deployed without adequate information, protection and support.
- **International Engagement:** India will continue working through the IMO and concerned flag administrations to uphold maritime conventions, seafarer safety and the right of innocent passage.

RELEVANCE

GS II : Indian Polity - Judiciary

Draft National Health Research Policy, 2026

The **Department of Health Research (DHR)** has released the Draft National Health Research Policy, 2026 with the objective of creating a unified national framework for health research. Covering areas such as **biomedical science, clinical medicine, public health, epidemiology, digital health, health systems, behavioural sciences and emerging technologies**, the policy seeks to align scientific research more closely with India's disease burden, public health priorities and evidence-based policymaking. Stakeholder consultations have been initiated before the policy is finalised.

Need for the Policy

The draft policy notes that although India has developed significant research capacity through institutions such as the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**, universities and medical colleges, **research remains fragmented and unevenly distributed across States and institutions**. It highlights that research priorities often do not adequately reflect disease burden, health-system gaps, equity concerns or pandemic preparedness. Further, **administrative and regulatory delays, limited institutional capacity and the slow translation of research findings into healthcare delivery and public policy** continue to constrain the effectiveness of the country's health research ecosystem.

Key Institutional and Governance Reforms

The policy proposes a **three-tier governance structure** comprising a **National Health Research Stewardship Committee** for strategic direction, the **Department of Health Research (DHR)** as the nodal implementing agency, and the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)** as the **scientific and technical lead**. States and Union Territories are expected to integrate research into local health programmes and service delivery. It also proposes a mechanism for the periodic identification of national research priorities based on disease burden, scientific opportunities, equity, pandemic preparedness and strategic national interests through consultations with governments, researchers, healthcare professionals and community representatives.

Capacity Building and Research Outcomes

Recognising that high-quality research depends on strong institutions, the policy emphasises expanding research infrastructure, strengthening the scientific workforce, reducing administrative bottlenecks and promoting collaboration among government institutions, academia, industry and non-profit organisations. It places particular emphasis on research ethics, integrity, data governance, cybersecurity and community participation. The policy also proposes shifting research assessment beyond traditional indicators such as publications and patents to include contributions towards public policy, clinical practice, indigenous technologies, health programmes, institutional capacity, equity and broader societal impact.



Way Forward

The Draft National Health Research Policy, 2026 represents a shift from institution-centric research towards a needs-based, outcome-oriented and collaborative health research ecosystem. By strengthening governance, addressing systemic constraints and aligning research priorities with national and community health needs, the policy seeks to improve the contribution of scientific research to healthcare delivery, public health preparedness and evidence-based policy formulation.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. Scientific research in Indian universities is declining, because a career in science is not as attractive as are business professions, engineering or administration, and the universities are becoming consumer-oriented. Critically comment. (GS III – 2014)

RELEVANCE

GS II : Education, Healthcare

Rising inflation complicates RBI's choice (Indian Express : 15-07-2026)

India's Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based retail inflation increased to 4.38% in June, up from 3.93% in May, primarily driven by rising prices in the food, transport and restaurant segments. The average inflation for the quarter stood at 3.9%, which remains slightly below the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) latest projection of 4.2%. However, as this is the final inflation reading before the August meeting of the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), the latest data presents a more complex inflation outlook than the headline figures alone suggest.

Food Inflation and Agricultural Concerns

Food inflation rose from 4.78% to 5.32% during the month, with commodities such as ginger, tomato and raisins registering significant price increases. The outlook for food prices remains uncertain due to an uneven monsoon. Since June 1, cumulative rainfall has been 19.3% below normal, resulting in a 16% decline in kharif sowing compared to the previous year. With the sowing season nearing its close and El Niño conditions strengthening, concerns over agricultural output and future food prices have increased, adding uncertainty to the inflation trajectory.

Broader Inflationary Pressures

Apart from food, inflation also accelerated in the transport and restaurant categories. The increase in transport inflation reflects the full impact of the mid-May petrol and diesel price hikes, which became fully visible in June. Rising food and fuel costs have also translated into higher prices in restaurants, indicating that input cost pressures are gradually being passed on to consumers. Analysts expect these higher input and fuel costs to progressively influence prices across other non-food sectors, thereby broadening inflationary pressures beyond food alone.

Implications for Monetary Policy

At its previous meeting, the RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) maintained a status quo on both the policy rate and its monetary policy stance. Although international crude oil prices had eased after earlier highs, the resurgence of hostilities in West Asia has introduced fresh uncertainty, with Brent crude oil prices rising by about 7.5% over the past five days. Consequently, the MPC will have to carefully balance the evolving domestic inflation risks alongside external developments while assessing their implications for economic growth and price stability.

RELEVANCE

GS III : Indian Economy



Global Context and Outlook

The MPC's upcoming decision will also be influenced by developments in the global monetary environment. Major central banks have already begun responding to inflationary pressures. The European Central Bank (ECB) raised interest rates at its June meeting and is scheduled to announce its next policy decision shortly, while the US Federal Reserve is also expected to meet later this month. These policy decisions will provide important signals on the future direction of monetary policy in advanced economies and will contribute to the broader context in which India's monetary policy decisions are made.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. What are the causes of persistent high food inflation in India? Comment on the effectiveness of the monetary policy of the RBI to control this type of inflation. (GS III – 2024)

Steady in turbulence (The Hindu : 15-07-2026)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visits to Australia and New Zealand marked an important step in deepening India's engagement in the Indo-Pacific. While India's relations with both countries have traditionally centred on trade, investment and strong people-to-people ties, the visits reflected an increasing emphasis on strategic, defence and maritime cooperation. The engagements align with India's Act East Policy, MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across Regions) vision and its commitment to a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific amid growing geopolitical competition and supply-chain disruptions.

India-Australia: Expanding the Strategic Partnership

India and Australia significantly upgraded their security partnership by adopting a Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation. The two countries agreed to strengthen defence interoperability, expand joint military exercises, institutionalise an Annual Defence Ministers' Dialogue, and enhance cooperation in cybersecurity, maritime security and emerging technologies. They also unveiled an India-Australia Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap to improve information sharing and operational coordination in the Indo-Pacific. In the economic sphere, Australia's decision to permit uranium exports for India's civilian nuclear programme and the commitment to strengthen cooperation in critical minerals are expected to support India's energy security and clean energy transition.



India-New Zealand: Towards a Strategic Partnership

India and New Zealand elevated their relationship to a formal Strategic Partnership and adopted a four-year roadmap for cooperation. The two countries agreed to deepen collaboration in maritime security in the Indo-Pacific, establish mutual logistics support between the Indian Navy and the New Zealand Defence Force, and expand cooperation in sectors such as agriculture. Building on the recently concluded India-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (FTA), both sides also committed to substantially increasing bilateral trade by 2030, reflecting the growing economic and strategic convergence between the two countries.

RELEVANCE

GS II : International Relations

Strategic Significance

The visits highlight India's broader strategy of strengthening partnerships across the Indo-Pacific to address challenges arising from geopolitical competition, supply-chain vulnerabilities, energy security and access to critical minerals and emerging technologies. By expanding defence cooperation while simultaneously deepening economic engagement, India seeks to reinforce regional stability without entering formal military alliances. These partnerships also support India's objective of preserving strategic autonomy by building a diversified network of like-minded partners capable of contributing to a stable and resilient Indo-Pacific.

Conclusion

The visits to Australia and New Zealand reinforce India's evolving Indo-Pacific strategy, which increasingly integrates security, economic resilience and regional cooperation. Guided by the Act East Policy and the MAHASAGAR vision, India aims to promote a free, open, inclusive and rules-based Indo-Pacific while safeguarding its national interests amid an increasingly uncertain global order. The strengthening of these partnerships demonstrates India's preference for collaborative security, diversified economic linkages and balanced diplomacy in an era of intensifying geopolitical competition.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. Evaluate the economic and strategic dimensions of India's Look East Policy in the context of the post Cold War international scenario. (GS II – 2016)

Amid new US tariff plan, Centre bars import of goods using forced labour

India has amended the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) to prohibit the import of goods produced wholly or partly through forced labour. The notification, issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), comes amid increasing global scrutiny of ethical supply chains and follows the United States' proposal to impose additional tariffs on Indian exports after a Section 301 investigation concerning forced labour enforcement.

Section 301 investigations

- The United States launched two Section 301 investigations against India in March 2026.
- The first investigation concluded that India had not effectively enforced restrictions on imports made using forced labour, prompting the USTR to propose an additional 12.5% tariff on Indian goods.
- While India has challenged the findings, the government has reiterated that eliminating forced labour is both a constitutional obligation and an international commitment.
- According to **the International Labour Organization (ILO)**, forced labour refers to any work or service extracted from a person under the threat of penalty and performed without voluntary consent.



Strategic and Geopolitical Significance

- The amendment explicitly incorporates forced labour into India's trade policy, strengthening the country's legal framework on **ethical sourcing**.
- It aligns India's domestic regulations with international labour standards, particularly those under the ILO Forced Labour Convention.
- The measure is expected to enhance India's credibility in ongoing trade negotiations, including discussions with the United States, while demonstrating the country's commitment to responsible global supply chains.
- The notification also reflects the growing use of labour standards as trade policy instruments by major economies. Similar measures are increasingly being adopted by the United States and the European Union to regulate imports linked to forced labour.

Implemented effectively, the measure can strengthen India's compliance with international labour norms, improve its position in future trade negotiations, and promote greater transparency and sustainability in global supply chains.

DGFT and Foreign Trade Policy

- The **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)** is an attached office of the **Department of Commerce**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It functions through four Zonal Offices at Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai.
- The DGFT is responsible for implementing India's Foreign Trade Policy and regulating exports and imports.
- The DGFT has **inserted a new provision in the Foreign Trade Policy prohibiting the import of goods manufactured wholly or partly through forced labour**.
- The Central Government may notify specific products whose import will be prohibited based on the findings of DGFT enquiries or other relevant material.
- The notification also empowers the DGFT to initiate suo motu enquiries, thereby enabling action even in the absence of formal complaints.
- **The provisions will become effective after the expiry of thirty days** from their publication in the Official Gazette.

RELEVANCE

GS II : International Relations;

GS III : Indian Economy

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



- Q. International Labour Organization's Conventions 138 and 182 are related to –
- Child labour
 - Adaptation of agricultural practices to global climate change
 - Regulation of food prices and food security
 - Gender parity at the workplace

Why does India need an Index of Services Production?

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has launched the trial and inaugural release of the Index of Services Production (ISP), a high-frequency indicator to measure short-term changes in India's formal services sector. Conceived as the services-sector counterpart to the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), the ISP will be released monthly and currently **covers 19 sub-sectors**, accounting for about **60% of the services sector**, which contributes over **55% of India's Gross Value Added (GVA)**.

Why was the ISP Needed?

Unlike the industrial sector, which has long been tracked through the IIP, the services sector lacked a comparable high-frequency indicator despite being the largest contributor to India's economy. Policymakers primarily relied on quarterly GDP estimates and indirect indicators, making it difficult to monitor short-term sectoral performance. Measuring services is inherently more complex due to the intangible nature of services, rapid technological changes, evolving business models and the predominance of the informal sector, necessitating a dedicated statistical framework for timely and evidence-based policymaking.

Key Features and Institutional Framework

The ISP has been developed by MoSPI with 2024-25 as the base year and draws upon multiple data sources, including Goods and Services Tax (GST) data, administrative records and the Annual Survey of Incorporated Services Sector Enterprises (ASISSE). The index measures monthly production across 19 formal service sub-sectors and is intended to progressively expand its coverage. It also complements ongoing efforts such as the experimental Services Producer Price Index (PPI) to improve the measurement of real service sector output.



Significance and Challenges

The ISP strengthens India's statistical system by providing timely and granular information on the performance of the services sector, thereby supporting GDP estimation, inflation analysis, employment projections and evidence-based policymaking. It can also facilitate the identification of high-growth and underperforming sub-sectors and, with future disaggregated data, support state-level planning. However, challenges remain due to the limited coverage of the informal sector, dependence on administrative datasets such as GST, inadequate service-sector price deflators and the inherent difficulty of measuring the quality and volume of services, all of which may affect the accuracy of real output estimates.

Conclusion

The introduction of the Index of Services Production marks an important institutional reform in India's macroeconomic statistical framework, bringing the country in line with economies such as Japan, South Korea, China and the European Union, which maintain dedicated services production indices. Its long-term effectiveness, however, will depend on expanding sectoral coverage, improving data quality and developing robust methodologies capable of accurately capturing both the formal and informal segments of India's rapidly evolving services economy.

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. In India, in the overall Index of Industrial Production, the Indices of Eight Core Industries have a combined weight of 37.90%. Which of the following are among those Eight Core Industries?

1. Cement
2. Fertilizers
3. Natural gas
4. Refinery products
5. Textiles

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- a) 1 and 5 only b) 2,3 and 4 only
 c) 1,2,3 and 4 only d) 1,2,3,4 and 5

RELEVANCE

GS III : Indian Economy

PYQ Compass

UPSC questions previously asked from the themes discussed on this page.



Q. International Labour Organization's Conventions 138 and 182 are related to (2018) –

- Child labour
- Adaptation of agricultural practices to global climate change
- Regulation of food prices and food security
- Gender parity at the workplace

Ans : a

The International Labour Organization (ILO) has adopted two core conventions that form the cornerstone of the global framework for the elimination of child labour.

ILO Convention No. 138 (Minimum Age Convention, 1973)

Convention No. 138 seeks the effective abolition of child labour by requiring countries to establish a minimum legal age for admission to employment and progressively raise it in line with the physical and mental development of children.

Key provisions include:

- Requires countries to fix a minimum age for employment, generally 15 years.
- The minimum age for employment should be aligned with the age of completion of compulsory education.
- Prescribes 18 years as the minimum age for hazardous work, i.e., work that is likely to endanger a child's health, safety or morals.
- Requires governments to adopt national policies aimed at the progressive elimination of child labour.

ILO Convention No. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999)

Convention No. 182 complements Convention 138 by requiring the immediate elimination of the worst forms of child labour for all persons below 18 years.

Q. In India, in the overall Index of Industrial Production, the Indices of Eight Core Industries have a combined weight of 37.90%. Which of the following are among those Eight Core Industries?

- Cement
- Fertilizers
- Natural gas
- Refinery products
- Textiles

Select the correct answer using the codes given below:

- 1 and 5 only
- 2,3 and 4 only
- 1,2,3 and 4 only
- 1,2,3,4 and 5

Ans : C

The Eight Core Industries are the key infrastructure sectors of the economy whose performance serves as an important indicator of industrial activity. Their output is compiled through the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI), which acts as a leading indicator for the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).

The eight core industries are:

- Coal, Crude Oil, Natural Gas, Refinery Products, Fertilizers, Steel, Cement, and Electricity

Therefore:

- Statement 1 (Cement) – Correct
- Statement 2 (Fertilizers) – Correct
- Statement 3 (Natural gas) – Correct
- Statement 4 (Refinery products) – Correct
- Statement 5 (Textiles) – Incorrect.