

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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India is facing continued provocations from Pakistan in the form of drone incursions, missile threats, and heavy shelling along the border, leading to civilian casualties and heightened security preparedness. Simultaneously, India has abstained from an IMF vote that approved additional funding to Pakistan, citing concerns over its track record and potential misuse of funds.

India repels Pakistan strikes for second day

Blackout in several places of Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan as sirens blare along the border

Pakistan shelling kills 3 civilians in J&K; Prime Minister Modi chairs high-level security meeting

BSF kills at least seven terrorists while foiling an infiltration attempt along LoC in Jammu

Peerzada Ashiq
Vijaita Singh
SRINAGAR/JAMMU/DELHI

Blackout measures were put in place in several parts of Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, and Rajasthan on Friday as Pakistan continued to violate Indian airspace for the second consecutive day. Sirens blared and areas on the western border went dark as Indian armed forces used air defence mechanisms to thwart armed drone and missile attacks from Pakistan.

Drones, including suspected armed ones, were sighted at 26 locations ranging from Baramulla in J&K to Bhuj in Gujarat, the Indian Army said.

An armed drone targeted a civilian area in Ferozpur in Punjab resulting in severe injuries to members of a local family, an Army official said. Citizens, especially in border areas, were advised to remain indoors, limit unnecessary movement, and strictly follow safety instructions issued by local authorities. "While there is no need for panic, heightened vigilance and precaution are essential," the official said.

J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Friday evening urged people of Jammu to "stay off the streets and stay at home", as blasts echoed in the city. The Chief Minister said there were "intermittent sounds of blasts, probably heavy artillery".

Infiltration attempt

On Thursday, hundreds of drones that swarmed Indian skies were shot down and late in the evening, the Border Security Force (BSF) foiled an infiltration attempt along the border in the Samba sector of J&K, killing at least seven terrorists, an official said.

One woman and two students were killed in J&K as Pakistan resorted to heavy calibre mortar shelling in villages along the Line of Control (LoC) on Thursday night and Friday morning.

Locations including Baramulla, Srinagar, Avantipora, Nagrota, Jammu, Fe-



Lives disrupted: (clockwise from top) An aerial view of the blackout enforced in Amritsar, Punjab on Friday; family members mourn a woman killed in Pakistani shelling in Razerwani area of Uri in Jammu and Kashmir; civilians from the same area being shifted in a police vehicle to a safer location. PTI & IMRAN NISSAR

rozpur, Pathankot, Fazilka, Lalgarh Jatta, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Bhuj, Kuarbet and Lakhi Nala were targeted by aerial objects on Friday.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired a high-level meeting at his residence on Friday, attended by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh, Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi, Navy Chief Admiral D.K. Tripathi, and Tapan Kumar Deka, Director, Intelligence Bureau.

An armed drone targeted a civilian area in Ferozpur, resulting in severe in-

juries to members of a local family, a source said adding the injured have been provided medical assistance and the area has been sanitised by security forces.

A sudden power outage had plunged Jammu city into darkness following two loud explosions on Friday night, likely from the interception of intruding drones. Immediately after, sirens echoed throughout the city, alerting residents to seek shelter.

Aerial objects had attempted to strike the strategic Jammu airport and its surrounding areas, which house Army, Air Force, and paramilitary installations.

Locations including Baramulla, Srinagar, Avantipora, Nagrota, Jammu, Ferozpur, Pathankot, Fazilka, Lalgarh Jatta, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Bhuj, Kuarbet and Lakhi Nala were targeted by aerial objects on Friday.

"A shell fired from Pakistan landed just behind the Christ School, run by the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate, a congregation in Poonch. Tragically, the shell hit the home of two students of the school. Both unfortunately lost their lives and their parents were severely injured," Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said on the civilian deaths in J&K, while addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Friday.

The deceased woman, Nargis Bashir, was a resident of Baramulla's Uri and was hit by a mortar shrapnel when travelling from Razerwani to Mohra.

Lieutenant-Governor Manoj Sinha, Mr. Abdullah and senior Minister Sakina Itoot met victims of shelling in both Kashmir and Jammu.

Residents said the intensity of shelling was higher than that witnessed during the 1999 Kargil war.

India shares 3,323 km of its land border with Pakistan along the States of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab, and the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh.

Pak. used 400 drones possibly from Turkiye

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

Pakistan attempted drone intrusions at 36 locations from Leh to Sir Creek with approximately 300 to 400 drones on Thursday night, Wing Commander Vyomika Singh said at a media briefing on Friday. Pakistan also attempted to target the Bhatinda military station with an armed Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), which was "detected and neutralised", she added.

In response, Indian armed forces launched strikes on four air defence sites in Pakistan. An air defence radar was destroyed by one of them, Wing Commander Singh said.

The drones were possibly of Turkish origin, likely to test Indian air defences, Wing Commander Singh said while accusing Pakistan of using civil airliners as a "shield".

'Cowardly actions'

Terming intrusions "cowardly actions", Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said these "provocative and escalatory" actions by Pakistan were targeted at Indian cities and civilian infrastructure, in addition to some military targets. "The Indian armed forces responded proportionately, adequately, and responsibly," Mr. Misri added.

"What I want to underline is that the official and blatantly farcical denial of these attacks that Pakistan carried out by the Pakistani State machinery is yet another example of their duplicity, and the new depths that they are plumb in their quest for disinformation," Mr. Misri added.

According to official sources, over 500 drones, mostly quadcopters, were launched in three waves in 36 locations across the western border between 8 p.m. on Thursday and 12 a.m. on Friday. The first

wave was relatively small, but increased over the next two waves, an informed source said. Meanwhile, heavy shelling by Pakistan continues along the Line of Control (LoC) which has resulted in fatalities and injuries among Army personnel, though the numbers were not disclosed.

Earlier in the day, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh chaired a meeting at South Block with Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi, Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K. Tripathi, Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh and Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh to review the security situation along the western border and the operational preparedness of the armed forces.

"On the intervening night of May 08-09, Pakistan military carried out multiple violations of Indian air space along the entire Western Border with an intent to target military infrastructure. Along the International Border and LoC, drone intrusions were attempted from Leh to Sir Creek at 36 locations with over 300-400 Drones," Wg Cdr Singh said at a media briefing on Friday. "Indian armed forces brought down a number of these drones using kinetic and non-kinetic means."

The possible purpose of these large-scale aerial intrusions was to test the AD systems and gather intelligence, she observed, stating that forensic examination of the drone debris is being done. Preliminary reports suggest that they are Assiguard Sogard Drones of Turkey, Wg Cdr Singh said.

Wg Cdr Singh said, "Pakistan is using civil airliners as a shield knowing fully well that its attack on India would elicit a swift AD response."

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UPSC Prelims Analysis:

- **India-Pakistan Border Tensions:**
 - Key areas affected: Baramulla, Jammu, Pathankot, Bhuji, and others.
 - BSF foiled an infiltration attempt and killed 7 terrorists in Samba sector.
 - Multiple drones, including armed ones, attempted airspace violations.
 - Strategic assets like Jammu airport were targeted.
- **Defence Preparedness:**
 - Use of air defence mechanisms and blackout protocols.
 - High-level security meeting chaired by PM Modi.
 - Importance of surveillance along LoC and western borders.
- **India and IMF:**
 - India abstained from voting on IMF's financial package to Pakistan.
 - Pakistan has a poor track record of IMF loan utilization.
 - India cited risk of debt misuse for state-sponsored terrorism.

UPSC Mains Analysis:**1. Internal Security & Border Management :**

- **Increased Use of Drones and Asymmetric Warfare:**
 - The drone incursions across the LoC represent a shift toward low-cost, high-impact asymmetric threats. This reflects the increasing use of drone warfare in modern conflict zones, requiring India to bolster its counter-UAV capabilities and surveillance systems.
- **Impact on Civilians and Preparedness:**
 - Civilian casualties and blackouts highlight the human cost of continued border hostilities. The administration's response, including public advisories and emergency protocols, shows the importance of a robust civil defence mechanism.

2. India's Foreign Policy and Multilateral Diplomacy :

- **India's Stand at the IMF:**
 - India's abstention is diplomatically significant—it conveys disapproval of unconditional funding to Pakistan without directly opposing the vote. This avoids diplomatic confrontation while sending a firm message regarding Pakistan's track record and terrorism links.

- **Economic Diplomacy vs Strategic Security:**

- The abstention reflects a nuanced balance between international institutional responsibilities and national security interests. It also puts the spotlight on how international lending institutions may inadvertently empower states with problematic track records.

3. Political Criticism and Domestic Debate:

- The Indian National Congress criticized the abstention, calling it a weak stand. This brings forth the debate over how foreign policy decisions are communicated domestically and politically.
- **Ethical and Strategic Considerations:**
 - Can humanitarian funding be separated from national security concerns?
 - To what extent should global financial institutions account for a borrower's strategic behavior and regional stability impact?

Conclusion:

- The current developments reflect the rising tensions in Indo-Pak relations, involving both kinetic actions (shelling, drones) and strategic diplomacy (IMF vote). India's measured response showcases the interplay of defence readiness, civil protection, and global financial engagement in securing national interest.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques With reference to India's defence preparedness, consider the following statements:

1. The Border Security Force (BSF) is responsible for guarding India's borders with both Pakistan and China.
2. Drones and UAVs are considered conventional methods of warfare under international law.
3. India has implemented blackout protocols in civilian areas during cross-border escalations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 3 only
- c) 1 and 3 only

d) 2 and 3 only

Ans : c)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques : India's abstention from the IMF vote on Pakistan reflects a calibrated strategic diplomacy. Examine the statement in the context of India's foreign policy and regional security concerns.



Amid rising tensions on the borders and escalating public anxiety, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi issued a public statement clarifying that India has ample stocks of essential food grains and fuels. The government's aim is to curb rumour-mongering, prevent panic buying, and deter hoarding, invoking provisions of the Essential Commodities Act to ensure market stability.

Public Communication During Crisis:

- The government's proactive messaging reflects an effort to maintain public trust and avoid breakdown of normal market behavior.
- Crisis communication is a vital aspect of governance, particularly when national security and supply chain concerns overlap.

Legal and Institutional Measures:

- Invocation of the Essential Commodities Act against hoarding or artificial scarcity is a governance tool aimed at market regulation.
- This act empowers authorities to control prices, distribution, and stock limits of essential commodities, ensuring equitable access.

Centre-State Cooperation:

- Although food and public distribution is a concurrent subject, central advisories play a key role in coordinating enforcement with state agencies.

Food Security & Stock Management:

- The government's assurance is backed by hard data: rice and wheat stocks are significantly above buffer norms, suggesting a resilient food security framework.
- India's Public Distribution System (PDS) and buffer stock policy under the Food Corporation of India (FCI) serve as critical stabilizers during economic or political disruptions.

Energy Security and Market Stability:

- Statements from Indian Oil, BPCL, and HPCL assuring fuel availability aim to

Don't believe rumours; have enough food stocks: Joshi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Urging people not to fall prey to misleading reports, Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said here on Friday that there is no shortage of essential commodities in the country.

"Whether it is rice, wheat, or pulses such as *chana*, *tur*, *masoor*, or *moong*, there is absolutely no shortage, and citizens are advised not to panic or rush to the markets to purchase food grains," he said in a statement, and asked people not to believe in propaganda messages regarding food stocks.

"We have ample food stocks, far exceeding required norms. Don't pay heed to such messages. Traders, wholesalers, retailers or business entities which engage in trading of essential commodities are directed to cooperate with law enforcement agencies. Any person indulging in hoarding or stockpiling shall be prosecuted under relevant sections of the Essential Commodities Act," Mr. Joshi said.

The Ministry said in a statement that the current rice stock stands at 356.42 lakh tonnes (lt) against a buffer norm of 135 lt. Similarly, wheat stock is 383.32 lt against a buffer norm of 276 lt, the Ministry said.

Adequate fuel stock

India has ample stocks of petrol, diesel and cooking gas LPG, and there is no need for panic buying, oil companies assured the public on Friday.

The State-owned Indian Oil Corporation Ltd., Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd., and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd. in separate statements, promised enough stock availability and smooth operations.

(With PTI inputs)

Daily News Analysis

prevent panic buying and ensure energy supply chain continuity.

- Strategic reserves of petroleum and LPG are part of India's energy preparedness framework, crucial for national security.

Hoarding and Black Marketing Risks:

- In times of perceived scarcity or instability, markets may witness artificial price rise, hoarding, or black-market operations.
- The government's threat of legal action under the Essential Commodities Act serves both as deterrent and reassurance to consumers.

Ethical and Administrative Perspective:

- The ethical obligation of the government to ensure transparent communication and prevent misinformation is a pillar of responsive governance.
- Ensuring that supply chains remain undisrupted while penalizing exploitative behavior is both a moral and constitutional responsibility.

Conclusion:

The government's public messaging and stock disclosures are an example of preventive governance aimed at tackling economic misinformation, ensuring public calm, and enforcing regulatory discipline. It reflects a comprehensive strategy where food security, energy security, and public confidence are maintained through timely communication, legal enforcement, and institutional readiness.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques :Discuss the significance of the Essential Commodities Act in ensuring equitable access to food and fuel resources in times of perceived or actual scarcity.(150 words)

The 23rd South Asia Press Freedom Report titled "Frontline Democracy: Media and Political Churn" raises serious concerns about the shrinking space for press freedom in India and South Asia. It highlights the systematic use of laws, technology, and political machinery to curb dissent, control narratives, and suppress independent journalism.

India a part of wider trend of eroding press freedom: report

The report says that most governments in South Asia have failed to reverse the increasing levels of impunity for crimes against journalists; it also notes proliferation of disinformation in India in which IT cells of political parties play a big role

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Indian media "has been shackled and subjected to a systematic strategy to cripple it", according to the 23rd Annual South Asia Press Freedom Report 2024-25. The report, titled "Frontline Democracy: Media and Political Churn", flags several concerning trends, including a "growing trust deficit in media outlets", "choking of independent websites" and the extreme precarity of gig workers who are also having to contend with the challenges posed by Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The report reviews the state of press freedom in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Maldives. Noting that Pakistan is "for all intents and purposes an authoritarian regime operating under the guise of democracy", the study pointed out that it witnessed the "most violent



year for journalists in the country in two decades with eight journalists killed in the period under review." Highlighting that most governments in South Asia have failed to reverse the "ever increasing levels of impunity for crimes against journalists", the report reveals details of the "horrific murder of Mukesh Chandrakar in Bastar", who was abducted, murdered and buried in a septic tank.

In a section titled "In-

dia: Propaganda and the Press", the report flagged the proliferation of hate speech and disinformation with the "IT cells" of political parties playing a big role.

Self-censorship issues

Noting that "the legal environment for the press has become increasingly hostile in recent years", the report pointed to the use of "defamation laws, sedition charges, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act

(UAPA) and Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)" to curb media freedom. "Journalists and media houses have faced legal challenges for publishing reports critical of the government, which has led to self-censorship within the industry, following a chilling effect," it said.

"Every authoritarian effort is being made to crush those who seek to hold power to account – crackdowns on media houses; surveillance, intimidation and harassment of journalists, filing of police cases; arbitrary detentions; and the unleashing of raids by the Income Tax Department, and the Enforcement Directorate that oversees financial crimes," the report stated, adding that "withholding government advertisements are routine avenues to harass media houses." Further, the "ongoing mauling of freedom of speech and expression is being done on grounds of national security, maintaining public order, or

preventing misinformation," the report said.

It referenced the Global Risks Report 2024, which has found "manipulated and falsified information" to be the "most severe short-term risk the world faces".

The report also dwells on other challenges facing the media, in India specifically and South Asia in general. These include the media workforce reeling under a "shrunk job market", the "growing use of AI for content creation", decline in advertisement revenue, new labour codes encouraging contract work, restructuring of corporate media houses because of mergers and acquisitions, and the worsening precarity of freelance journalism.

On the flip side, the report noted that the media's digital transition has also presented new opportunities, especially for "growing alternative media as a counterbalance to the stagnating legacy media".

Key Issues Highlighted in the Report:**1. Decline in Press Freedom:**

- The report asserts that Indian media is being "shackled" through a systemic strategy involving legal, economic, and institutional pressure.
- There is a growing trust deficit in mainstream media and choking of independent websites that challenge dominant narratives.

2. Legal and Institutional Suppression:

- Laws like Sedition, Defamation, UAPA, PMLA and actions such as raids by the Enforcement Directorate and IT Department are reportedly used to intimidate or silence dissenting journalists.
- Self-censorship is increasing as media houses seek to avoid legal battles and financial pressure, resulting in a chilling effect on free expression.

3. Disinformation and Political Interference:

- The report accuses IT cells of political parties of actively disseminating disinformation and hate speech, manipulating public opinion, and delegitimizing critical journalism.
- This aligns with global concerns over "falsified information" being a top risk, as noted in the Global Risks Report 2024.

4. Violence and Impunity:

- South Asia remains a dangerous region for journalists, with India witnessing horrific cases such as the murder of journalist Mukesh Chandrakar in Bastar.
- Most governments in the region have failed to ensure justice for crimes against journalists, enabling a culture of impunity.

5. Socio-Economic Pressures:

- Indian media professionals are facing job insecurity, growing reliance on gig work, and increasing use of AI in content creation, reducing human oversight and editorial integrity.
- Decline in advertisement revenue and structural changes in media organizations have added to the precarity of freelance journalism.

Constitutional and Ethical Dimensions:

Daily News Analysis

- Article 19(1)(a) of the Indian Constitution guarantees freedom of speech and expression, which includes press freedom.
- However, reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) (public order, national security, etc.) must not be disproportionately invoked to suppress democratic discourse.
- The use of surveillance, economic coercion, and legal harassment raises ethical questions about the role of the state in a democracy.

Opportunities Amid Crisis:

- The report does point to a silver lining in the form of a digital media transition, where alternative and independent media platforms are emerging as counterweights to legacy media controlled by corporate or political interests.

Conclusion:

The report paints a sobering picture of the press landscape in India, where systemic suppression, disinformation, and shrinking economic independence threaten the role of the fourth pillar of democracy. At the same time, it calls for institutional accountability, legal reforms, and protection mechanisms for journalists, as well as support for ethical, independent digital media that can reinvigorate public trust in journalism.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: With reference to press freedom in India, consider the following statements:

- 1. Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution guarantees freedom of the press explicitly.*
- 2. The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) has been used against journalists in India.*
- 3. The Essential Commodities Act is related to media regulation in India.*

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 2 only*
- b) 1 and 3 only*
- c) 1 and 2 only*
- d) 2 and 3 only*

Ans : a)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques :The freedom of the press is not just a constitutional right but the backbone of a democratic society." In light of recent developments, evaluate the state of press freedom in India.(150 Words)



The Zero Waste Himalaya Alliance, through its flagship initiative The Himalayan Cleanup (THC), has revealed that 84% of the plastic waste found in the Indian Himalayan region comes from single-use food and beverage packaging. More alarmingly, 70% of this waste is non-recyclable, highlighting the scale of the ecological crisis in one of the world's most fragile ecosystems.

'Single-use food, beverage packaging forms 84% of Himalayan plastic waste'

Rahul Karmakar
GUWAHATI

Single-use food and beverage packaging forms more than 84% of the plastic waste in the eco-sensitive Himalayan region, an anti-waste collective of NGOs has found.

According to the Zero Waste Himalaya Alliance, about 70% of the plastics collected from across the Himalayan belt from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh is non-recyclable.

The gravity of the environmental reality came to light at the Zero Waste Himalaya Network Meet held in Himachal Pradesh's Bir in April.

The alliance was initiated by the Zero Waste Himalaya, an organisation based in Sikkim's Gangtok, and the Integrated Mountain Initiative based in Uttarakhand's Dehradun. The two organisations have been spearheading The Himalayan Cleanup (THC), one



According to a Collective, about 70% of the plastics collected from across the Himalayan belt is non-recyclable. FILE PHOTO

of the biggest movements against plastic pollution in the Indian Himalayan region, since 2018.

A statement issued by the alliance on Thursday said, "Over the past six years, the data has indicated that the Himalayan waste crisis is fundamentally a production and systems issue rather than a post-consumer waste management flaw. While the role of individual behavioural change was acknowledged and emphasised, the need for

systemic, policy-level interventions and a paradigm shift away from centralised, extractive waste systems was seen as critical."

A report released by THC said the 2018 waste collection exercise was conducted at more than 250 sites.

Among the nine Himalayan States targeted in 2025, Sikkim generated the most trash items. This was followed by West Bengal's Darjeeling with 36,180 items audited across 37 sites.

Key Issues Highlighted:

1. Composition of Waste:

- Majority of the plastic pollution (84%) in the Himalayas is linked to single-use packaging from food and beverage products.
- Non-recyclable plastics dominate the waste stream, making traditional post-consumer waste management methods ineffective.

2. Regional Focus:

- The waste audit covered the Himalayan stretch from Ladakh to Arunachal Pradesh, with Sikkim and Darjeeling showing high volumes of trash.
- This implies both ecological pressure and the failure of local systems in managing consumer packaging waste.

Systemic Challenges Identified:

- **Production-centric Problem:**
 - The report argues that the waste crisis is not just a consumer or behavioural problem but a systemic issue driven by production patterns, especially corporate packaging practices.
 - Over-dependence on centralized, extractive waste systems has failed to cater to the needs of remote, ecologically sensitive mountain regions.
- **Policy Gaps and Governance Issues:**
 - The findings highlight lack of policy-level intervention to curb single-use plastic production at the source.
 - Current waste management policies in the Himalayan region are often urban-centric, unsuitable for mountain geographies with difficult terrain and limited infrastructure.
- **Implications for Environmental Sustainability:**
 - Plastic waste accumulation threatens the biodiversity, water sources, soil quality, and tourism-dependent livelihoods in the Himalayas.
 - Non-recyclable plastic can block mountain springs and glacial meltwater streams, affecting water security downstream.

Need for a Paradigm Shift:

Daily News Analysis

- The report calls for a paradigm shift toward decentralized, community-driven waste management, supported by:
 - Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) enforcement,
 - Ban on multi-layered packaging, and
 - Promotion of biodegradable alternatives.
- There's also an urgent need to empower local governance bodies (such as gram panchayats and urban local bodies) with funds, training, and infrastructure.

Conclusion:

The Himalayan waste crisis, as outlined by the Zero Waste Himalaya Alliance, signals the urgent need for policy reforms, producer accountability, and systemic change. The over-reliance on consumer-driven cleanup and recycling must be replaced by a robust, preventive and sustainable approach that tackles plastic pollution at its source, especially in eco-sensitive mountain regions.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : With reference to plastic pollution in the Indian Himalayan Region, consider the following statements:

- 1. Over 80% of plastic waste in the region comes from single-use food and beverage packaging.*
- 2. A majority of the plastic waste collected is recyclable.*
- 3. The Himalayan Cleanup is led by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).*

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Daily News Analysis

Ques: The Himalayan plastic waste crisis is not a post-consumer failure but a systemic and production-centric challenge. Critically examine the statement in the context of recent findings from the Himalayan Cleanup initiative.(250 Words)



At a session titled "Climate Calling: Is technology the panacea for a warming planet?", leading climate experts emphasized the continued relevance of multilateral regimes in addressing global climate change. The discussion reflected on the evolution of climate science, India's role in climate action, and the urgent need for finance, technology, and localized research.

Environment

Key Themes and Insights:

1. Continued Relevance of Multilateralism in Climate Action:

- Despite challenges like the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement under Donald Trump, experts like Arunabha Ghosh reaffirmed that multilateral platforms such as UNFCCC and Paris Agreement remain essential for collective progress.
- Multilateralism may suffer from weak enforcement, but it provides opportunities for sector-specific agreements (similar to trade pacts), enabling coordination across energy, agriculture, and emissions.

2. Climate Science and Public Awareness:

- Suruchi Bhadwal (TERI) highlighted that two decades ago, there was public scepticism about climate science. Today, climate impacts are visible in the form of heatwaves, floods, and erratic rainfall.
- The increasing public acceptance of climate science now requires transitioning from awareness to actionable frameworks, especially in vulnerable countries like India.

3. Finance and Technology as Enablers:

- Climate adaptation and mitigation require massive financial and technological support.



On climate crisis: Suruchi Bhadwal, Arunabha Ghosh and Sambuddha Misra speaking during a session at *The Hindu* Huddle in Bengaluru on Friday. K. MURALI KUMAR

Role of multilateral regime remains relevant in fight against climate change: experts

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

From the impact of Donald Trump's election as U.S. President on the climate change discourse to the relevance of a multilateral regime for climate change, the evolution of climate science over the decades, and the need for India to develop its own climate models, experts on Friday offered multi-layered perspectives on one of the most pressing issues of our time.

Arunabha Ghosh, Founder-CEO, Council on Energy, Environment, and Water, said the role of a multilateral regime in dealing with climate remained relevant, despite the Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

"The science is unequivocal. The planet is warming because of human activities, and it is warming much faster than our models have anticipated. If we do not have a common platform to discuss the science and understand how this is impacting us, we are living in a fool's paradise," Mr. Ghosh said in a session titled "Climate calling: Is technology the panacea for a warming planet?", moderated by Jacob Koshy, Deputy Science Editor, *The Hindu*. Mr. Ghosh also added that while the multilateral regime has a major deficiency in terms of enforcement, "It gives us an opportunity to start striking sectoral agreements, just like in the world of trade," he said.

Drawing from her experience in the field, Suruchi Bhadwal, Director, Climate Change and Air Quality, TERI, said the progress of climate science meant that

"there is far more confidence and evidence out there".
When she started 25-odd years ago, people were not very convinced about what was being shared about climate change, Ms. Bhadwal said. "Today, we do not have to make the same case to people because they are experiencing those changes. We are talking about the heatwaves, the floods, the rainfall, heavy precipitation incidents you see around the country." While the science is "strong and solid", there continues to be "the need for the right kind of technologies, finance to be put in place to help countries cope with the situation that may arise," she said.

The other aspects of climate change that were discussed at the session included the economic feasibility of clean energy, why climate action needs to be part of a country's industrial policy, the repercussions of ocean warming on marine ecosystems, whether enhanced rock weathering (ERW) can be a climate solution, why a climate change market is needed, the problematic nature of some technologies such as Colossal Biosciences' reconstruction of the genome of the long-extinct Dire wolf, and whether India could play a significant role in contributing to climate change research.

"In terms of India, what I think will matter the most is if we can stop the export of really bright Ph.D. students to the U.S...because research is student-driven," Sambuddha Misra, Chemical Oceanographer and Professor, IISc, said. "The best of the brains are exported... (due to) a combination of post-colonial hangover and the idea that India is resource-limited," he added.

- This includes:
 - Affordable clean energy,
 - Advanced forecasting and disaster management tools,
 - Low-carbon industrial solutions, and
 - Green hydrogen, carbon capture, and storage technologies.

4. India's Role and Challenges in Climate Research:

- India must develop indigenous climate models, as global models may not account for India-specific variables (monsoons, Himalayan systems, etc.).
- Sambuddha Misra (IISC) raised concern over India's "brain drain" in scientific research. Bright Indian students often go abroad due to:
 - Limited domestic research funding,
 - Post-colonial academic preferences, and
 - Insufficient infrastructure or mentorship support at home.

5. Risks and Ethics of Emerging Technologies:

- The panel discussed controversial innovations like genome reconstruction and geoengineering (e.g., enhanced rock weathering - ERW), warning that:
 - Some of these may offer false promises or unintended consequences,
 - Ethical oversight and global scientific consensus are needed before such technologies are deployed.

Significance for India's Climate Strategy:

- India must align climate action with industrial policy, not view it as an environmental cost.
- It also needs to:
 - Strengthen domestic research capacity,
 - Retain scientific talent, and
 - Promote grassroots innovation and decentralized renewable energy solutions.
- Climate leadership will require balancing economic growth with ecological responsibility.

Conclusion:

Daily News Analysis

- The discussion at The Hindu Huddle reinforces that climate change is not just an environmental issue—it is an interconnected crisis of economy, governance, science, and society. Multilateralism, despite its flaws, remains indispensable, and India has a critical role to play by investing in indigenous research, clean tech, and inclusive policies that integrate climate action with development.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques : With reference to multilateral climate agreements, consider the following statements:

1. The Paris Agreement operates under the framework of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
2. The Paris Agreement has legally binding enforcement mechanisms for emission targets.
3. Sectoral agreements under multilateral climate regimes are similar in principle to trade agreements in WTO.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: India must move from being a climate rule-taker to a climate rule-maker." Analyze the steps India must take to strengthen its climate research and policy leadership. **(150 Words)**

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Sprouting sustainable, nutrition-sensitive food systems

The global food system is facing significant challenges from resource limitations and climate change even while trying to ensure food accessibility and affordability. Despite being a major producer of milk, fruits, vegetables, grains and livestock, India struggles with nutritional issues, which include undernutrition and overnutrition, alongside widespread micronutrient deficiencies. These jeopardise its demographic dividend and economic resilience. Ranked 105 out of 127 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2024, India's food insecurity requires urgent action.

The data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5), 2019-21 is cause for concern: nearly 194 million Indians are undernourished. Among children under five, 35.5% are stunted, 32.1% are underweight, and 19.3% suffer from wasting. Simultaneously, there is a worrying increase in overweight and obesity, affecting 24% of women and 22.9% of men. Additionally, 57% of women of reproductive age are anaemic, underscoring the widespread issue of hidden hunger. Thus, there needs to be a comprehensive strategy to address malnutrition in a holistic manner.

Globally, food system failures cost nearly \$12 trillion annually through health, nutrition, and environmental degradation. For India, with its fast-growing population and climate vulnerabilities, such as unsustainable trajectory is not an option. Yet, within this crisis lies a powerful opportunity – transforming food systems around nutrition, sustainability and equity can boost national well-being and support progress on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The nutrition challenge as a perfect storm

Food insecurity is no longer just about hunger. It now encompasses all forms of malnutrition, including diet-related non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Millions, including food producers, struggle to afford a healthy diet. According to the FAO, 55.6% of Indians are unable to afford nutritious food, with the cost rising to \$3.36 purchasing power parity (PPP) per person per day in 2022 from \$2.86 in 2017.

Structural flaws in food systems exacerbate this issue, while climate change further threatens



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India's struggle with nutritional issues must lead to a transformation where nutrition becomes an integral part of agriculture and economic planning

crop yields, biodiversity, and the livelihoods of small-scale farmers, deepening nutritional vulnerability.

If unaddressed, malnutrition will continue to impede human capital development, drive up health-care costs, and reduce economic productivity.

Transforming food systems

A shift towards sustainable, nutrition-sensitive food systems can ensure that healthy, safe food is accessible and affordable for all. This transformation demands a multi-sectoral approach involving governments, businesses, communities, and the health and nutrition sectors.

To achieve a meaningful transformation, several key strategies must be implemented in a cohesive and sustained manner. Nutrition-sensitive agriculture is central, requiring agricultural policies that integrate nutrition objectives by promoting the cultivation of climate-resilient, biofortified crops, enhancing crop diversity, and improving post-harvest storage systems to bolster food security and dietary quality. Community-led nutrition interventions such as the Nutrition-Sensitive Community Planning (NSCP) model enable local communities to address nutrition determinants including soil and water conservation, Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), and health-care access through a bottom-up approach.

School-based nutrition programmes such as Nutri-Pathshala help combat childhood malnutrition by incorporating biofortified grains into school meals, while also supporting local agriculture by sourcing from nearby farmers. Strengthening social safety nets is essential to ensure that vulnerable populations have access to nutritious food – this involves enhancing the Public Distribution System (PDS) and mid-day meal schemes with nutrient-rich, indigenous foods and integrating behavioural change campaigns that encourage healthy eating.

The private sector must contribute by moving beyond conventional food production to prioritise nutrition, through clearer labelling, digital education tools such as QR codes on packaging, and innovation in fortification, plant-based alternatives, and nutrient-dense

foods, supported by effective regulations and incentives. Tackling underlying climate and economic vulnerabilities is another cornerstone, necessitating climate-smart agriculture, expanded rural economic opportunities and gender-sensitive policies that build resilience against shocks.

Finally, widespread awareness campaigns are indispensable; grass-roots efforts using interactive tools such as the 'MyPlate Blast Off' game and radio programming can disseminate vital nutritional information, especially in areas with limited digital access, fostering informed and healthier communities.

To achieve SDGs 2, 3, and 12 ('Zero Hunger', 'Good Health and Well-Being' and 'Responsible Consumption and Production') place-based innovation is key. Research by TERI and the Food and Land Use Coalition (FOLU) in the Himalayas has highlighted the importance of socio-technical innovation bundles. These include region-specific, micronutrient-rich crops, decentralised processing, and local food networks connecting farmers, processors, and consumers. Strengthening these community-based systems can enhance nutrition security.

Role of nutrition and health communities

The health and nutrition sectors are vital in driving food system transformation. Nutritionists, public health experts and policymakers must collaborate to embed nutrition into agriculture and economic planning. Tackling malnutrition and NCDs requires systemic approaches that address inequality and promote climate resilience. The NSCP and Nutri-Pathshala show the power of integrating nutrition with agriculture, education and social development.

Incremental change is no longer enough. A bold transformation of food systems is essential. Governments must align policies with nutrition, businesses must adopt sustainable practices, and civil society must push for inclusive, community-led solutions. Nutrition must guide how we shape food systems, economies, and policies. A nourished population is the bedrock of a resilient and equitable society. The challenge is vast, but so is the opportunity. The time to act is now.

Paper 02: Governance | Social Justice

UPSC Mains Practice Question: India's food security must evolve into nutrition security to address the triple burden of malnutrition." Discuss the policy challenges and suggest a holistic strategy to tackle undernutrition, overnutrition, and hidden hunger. (250 words)

Context :

Despite being a major agricultural producer, India ranks 105 out of 127 in the Global Hunger Index 2024 and faces a paradox of coexisting undernutrition, overnutrition, and micronutrient deficiency. The article highlights the urgent need for a nutrition-sensitive, sustainable transformation of India's food systems, integrating climate resilience, agricultural diversity, and community-led innovation.

Key Issues:**1. India's Nutrition Crisis:**

- **As per NFHS-5 (2019–21):**
 - 35.5% children under 5 are stunted,
 - 57% of reproductive-age women are anaemic,
 - Simultaneously, obesity is rising (24% of women and 22.9% of men affected).
 - Nearly 194 million Indians are undernourished, reflecting both caloric and nutrient deficiencies.
 - This "double burden of malnutrition" threatens economic productivity and human capital formation.

2. Structural Challenges in Food Systems:

- Food insecurity is not just about hunger, but also lack of affordable, nutritious food — over 55% of Indians cannot afford a healthy diet.
- Climate change and poor agricultural diversity threaten yields, smallholder income, and dietary quality.
- Environmental costs of current food systems are high — globally costing \$12 trillion annually in health, nutrition, and degradation.

Key Solutions and Policy Interventions Suggested:**1. Nutrition-Sensitive Agriculture:**

- Promote biofortified, climate-resilient crops, crop diversification, and improved storage systems.

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- Integrate nutrition objectives into agriculture policies and align with SDG targets (SDG 2: Zero Hunger; SDG 3: Good Health; SDG 12: Responsible Consumption).

2. Community-Led Innovations:

- NSCP Model (Nutrition-Sensitive Community Planning): Bottom-up interventions covering soil, WASH, and healthcare access.
- Nutri-Pathshala: School-based programmes using local biofortified grains.

3. Strengthen Public Schemes:

- Fortify PDS and mid-day meals with nutrient-rich indigenous foods.
- Promote behavioural change communication to spread awareness about healthy eating.

4. Private Sector and Tech Innovation:

- Encourage nutrition-focused food labelling, use of QR codes for education, and investment in plant-based and fortified food alternatives.
- Regulate the industry with incentives and sustainability mandates.

5. Resilience and Climate Action:

- Invest in climate-smart agriculture, rural economic opportunities, and gender-sensitive resilience policies.

6. Localised Innovation & Place-Based Solutions:

- Region-specific "socio-technical innovation bundles" — community food networks, decentralized processing, and micronutrient-focused cropping in vulnerable zones (e.g., Himalayas).

Role of Institutions and Stakeholders:

- Health and nutrition sectors must integrate with agriculture and economic planning.
- Collaboration among government, civil society, researchers, and businesses is critical for system-level change.
- Civil society movements can hold institutions accountable and build local capacity for inclusive food systems.

Conclusion:

- India's food system is at a critical juncture. The challenge of malnutrition is compounded by climate change, poverty, and systemic agricultural flaws. A multi-sectoral, nutrition-led transformation is required — integrating local innovation, policy alignment, community engagement, and sustainable business practices. Ensuring that nutrition guides food production and consumption is not only essential for public health but also for building a resilient and equitable India.