

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Jagdeep Dhankhar resigned as the 14th Vice-President of India citing health reasons, with two years left in his term. The resignation was submitted under Article 67(a) of the Indian Constitution.

Dhankhar submits his resignation to President

The 14th Vice-President of India leaves office with two years left in his term; decision comes on the first day of the Monsoon Session of Parliament; stepping down to abide by medical advice, he says

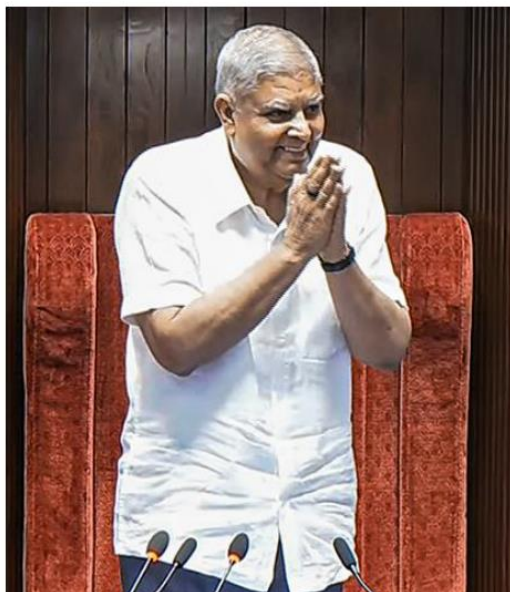
The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, 74, resigned from his post citing health reasons on Monday.

"To prioritise health care and abide by medical advice, I hereby resign as the Vice President of India, effective immediately, in accordance with Article 67(a) of the Constitution," the resignation letter addressed to President Droupadi Murmu, which was posted on the Vice-President's official X account, said. He had called on President Murmu in the evening.

Mr. Dhankhar had suffered a cardiac event in March but was said to have recovered and had been participating in his engagements since. The rest of the letter expressed his "deep gratitude" to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Council of Ministers as well as the "warmth, trust and affection" that he had received from MPs.

Mr. Dhankhar was elected India's 14th Vice-Presi-



Final session: Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar greets the members of the Rajya Sabha on Monday. ANI

dent in August 2022, and has two years left for his term to complete. President Murmu has not indicated whether she had accepted the resignation.

The move has come as a surprise to many leaders, as Mr. Dhankhar had presided over Rajya Sabha proceedings on the first

half of the first day of the Monsoon Session of Parliament on Monday, which included an important intervention in the Opposition-led motion for removal of High Court judge Justice Yashwant Varma. He did not return for the post-lunch Session but spoke to MPs and floor

leaders till evening.

Several MPs that *The Hindu* spoke to said he did not give any indication of quitting. He also presided over the Business Advisory Committee meeting of the Upper House at 12.30 p.m. Sources said that he was unlikely to attend the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

Mr. Dhankhar, who had been Governor of West Bengal before being elected V-P, had an eventful tenure, especially in terms of his public speeches and his role as presiding officer of the Rajya Sabha.

In December 2024, Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha Harivansh Narayan Singh dismissed a motion of impeachment against Mr. Dhankhar moved by the Opposition, calling it "a move to denigrate the dignity of a constitutional authority", reflecting the somewhat testy relationship between the Opposition and himself.

Senior Congress leader and party's chief whip in the Upper House, Jairam Ramesh said Mr. Dhankhar's resignation was "inexplicable" and "shocking."

Why it is significant?

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1. **Unexpected Constitutional Exit:** His resignation came on the first day of the Monsoon Session of Parliament, immediately after presiding over an important debate — creating political and procedural curiosity.
2. **Mid-term Constitutional Vacancy:** Constitutional authorities rarely resign mid-term unless due to grave political, ethical, or health-related causes. Such resignations impact continuity of leadership, especially in the Rajya Sabha, where the Vice-President acts as the ex-officio Chairman.

Constitutional Provision Involved:

- **Article 67(a):** "The Vice-President may resign his office by writing under his hand addressed to the President."
- Unlike the President (who has impeachment provisions), the Vice-President can resign or be removed through a resolution passed by the Rajya Sabha with a special majority.

Broader Implications:

1. Institutional Stability & Continuity:

- The resignation raises questions over succession planning, and continuity in the functioning of the Rajya Sabha.
- The absence of a presiding officer during key legislative sessions can impact parliamentary efficiency and impartial functioning.

2. Democratic Institutions and Dignity:

- The Vice-President's role is largely non-partisan, but Dhankhar had frequent clashes with Opposition parties.
- His resignation, following months of tension, hints at the strained relationship between constitutional offices and political discourse.

3. Role of the Vice-President in Indian Democracy:

- More than ceremonial: chairs Rajya Sabha, ensures order, interprets rules, allows debates, protects democratic functioning.
- Need for strengthening the impartiality and trust in such constitutional posts.

4. Administrative Ethics & Political Conduct:

- Dhankhar's decision to resign on health grounds reflects a personal ethical choice, respecting institutional integrity.

Daily News Analysis

- Raises debate on whether constitutional functionaries should continue under health duress or resign for effective governance.

Previous Controversies Involving Dhankhar:

- **Impeachment Motion (Dec 2024):** Dismissed as an act of "denigrating a constitutional authority" by Deputy Chairperson Harivansh.
- Frequent confrontations with Opposition leaders during Rajya Sabha debates.
- Outspoken speeches on judiciary and parliamentary supremacy, inviting criticism from jurists and politicians alike.

Political Reactions:

- Opposition leaders like Jairam Ramesh termed the resignation "shocking and inexplicable".
- Lack of any forewarning on the floor raises speculation about non-health related underlying reasons.

Conclusion:

Vice-President Dhankhar's resignation brings to light the fragile balance between constitutional decorum, political contestation, and institutional stability. As the second-highest constitutional authority, such exits demand transparency and structured transitions, especially in polarized political environments.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Which of the following statements is/are correct regarding the role of the Vice-President of India?

1. He is the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
2. He can cast a vote on all bills in the Rajya Sabha.
3. He is elected through a direct vote by the citizens.

Select the correct code:

- (A) 1 only
(B) 1 and 2 only
(C) 2 and 3 only
(D) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (A)

Parliament has initiated the process for the impeachment of **Justice Yashwant Varma** of the **Allahabad High Court**, following the discovery of **burnt currency notes at his official residence** in Delhi. Notices were submitted in both the **Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha**, with the required number of signatures.

Parliament begins process for Justice Varma's impeachment

63 Opposition members sign notice submitted to Rajya Sabha Chairman, while notice to Lok Sabha Speaker receives bipartisan backing, with 152 members, including Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, giving their signatures

Sandeep Phukan
Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The process to remove Justice Yashwant Varma from office was set in motion on Monday, with members of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha submitting notices to the presiding officers of their respective Houses, and Chairman of Rajya Sabha Jagdeep Dhankhar taking note of the move.

While the notice submitted to Mr. Dhankhar had signatures of 63 Opposition members, the one submitted to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla received bipartisan backing, with 152 members, including Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi, signing the notice.

The signatories to the notice in the Lok Sabha included BJP leaders Ravi Shankar Prasad and Anurag Thakur, Nationalist Congress Party (SP) member Supriya Sule, Congress leaders K.C. Venugopal and K. Suresh, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam leader T.R. Baalu, Revolutionary Socialist Party member N.K. Premachandran, and Indian Union Muslim League member E.T. Mohammed Basheer.

However, none from the Trinamool Congress and Samajwadi Party signed



Seeking action: Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla receiving a notice from MPs in New Delhi on Monday for the removal of the Allahabad High Court judge Yashwant Varma. PTI

the notice for removal of the High Court judge.

Justice Varma's responsibilities were taken away and he was transferred from the Delhi High Court to the Allahabad High Court after burnt currency notes were found at his official residence in Delhi on March 14.

A notice for the removal of a judge has to be signed by no fewer than 100 members in the Lok Sabha and 50 in the Rajya Sabha.

The motion can either be accepted or rejected by the Speaker or the Chairman.

Stating that he had received notices for removal of Justice Varma, Mr. Dhankhar said, "It is signed by

more than 50 members of the Council of States and thus, meets the numerical requirement of signing by Members of Parliament for setting in motion a process for removal of a High Court judge."

When he asked Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal whether a similar notice was submitted in the Lok Sabha, the Minister replied that 152 Lower House members had submitted a similar notice to the Speaker.

Setting up a committee

The Rajya Sabha Chairman informed the House that according to the Judges (Inquiry) Act, when notices of a motion are submitted on

the same day in both the Houses of Parliament, a committee to examine the charges levelled against the judge will be constituted jointly by the Lok Sabha Speaker and the Rajya Sabha Chairman.

The Act also states that no inquiry committee shall be constituted unless the motion has been admitted in both Houses.

"The Secretary-General will take the necessary steps in this direction," the Rajya Sabha Chairman announced.

A committee comprising a senior judge of the Supreme Court, a sitting Chief Justice of a High Court, and a distinguished jurist will then probe the

charges levelled against Justice Varma. It will be asked to come out with a report in three months.

The inquiry report will be tabled in Parliament, followed by a discussion in both Houses, after which there will be voting on the motion for the removal of Justice Varma.

In a post on X, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh said 63 Opposition members had submitted the notice to the Rajya Sabha chairman for removal of Justice Varma.

"Today 63 Rajya Sabha MPs belonging to various Opposition parties submitted a notice of motion to the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, for the removal of Justice Yashwant Varma under the Judges Inquiry Act, 1968. A similar motion for the removal of Justice Shekhar Yadav had been submitted to the Chairman Rajya Sabha way back on Dec 13, 2024," he said in his post on X.

Mentioning the notice for removal of Justice Shekhar Yadav of the Allahabad High Court, Mr. Dhankhar said an enquiry revealed that a member, whose signature was found twice on the notice, had denied signing it two times.

"That process is under progress. I will get an update and come back to the House," he said.

Key Constitutional and Legal Provisions:

- **Article 124(4)** (for Supreme Court judges) and **Article 217 read with 124(4)** (for High Court judges) lay down the process for removal of judges.
- Removal is based on **proved misbehaviour or incapacity**.
- The **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968** governs the procedure.
- **Requires:**

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- **100 MPs** in Lok Sabha or **50 MPs** in Rajya Sabha to sign the notice.
- Admission by the **Speaker/Chairman**.
- Formation of a **three-member inquiry committee**:
 - One SC judge,
 - One HC Chief Justice,
 - One eminent jurist.

Current Case Highlights:

- **152 MPs** (bipartisan, including BJP and Congress) signed the Lok Sabha notice.
- **63 Opposition MPs** signed the Rajya Sabha notice.
- **Speaker Om Birla** and **Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar** received the notices.
- The judge had earlier been **transferred from Delhi HC to Allahabad HC** following the controversy.
- No support from **Trinamool Congress** and **Samajwadi Party**.

Implications for Judicial Accountability:

Positive Aspects:

- 1. Democratic Oversight:**
 - Reinforces the idea that even the judiciary is not above scrutiny.
- 2. Due Process of Law:**
 - Shows Parliament's adherence to the constitutional mechanism, unlike summary or populist action.
- 3. Cross-party Consensus:**
 - Bipartisan support adds legitimacy to the impeachment move.
- 4. Institutional Integrity:**
 - May help restore public trust in judiciary by acting against alleged misconduct.

Concerns and Challenges:

- 1. High Threshold for Impeachment:**
 - Only one judge (Justice V. Ramaswami) has faced impeachment proceedings so far, and even that failed at the final stage.
 - No judge has ever been successfully impeached.
- 2. Potential for Politicization:**
 - The inclusion or exclusion of certain parties may hint at political motivations behind the move.
- 3. Impact on Judicial Independence:**

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- While accountability is key, frequent or frivolous motions can erode independence and create fear among judges.

4. **Delays and Technical Loopholes:**

- Past precedents (e.g., fake signatures in Justice Shekhar Yadav's case) indicate procedural loopholes that can stall the process.

Way Forward:

- **Reforms in Judges (Inquiry) Act** to make procedures more transparent and time-bound.
- **Judicial Standards and Accountability Bill** (pending for years) should be reconsidered to establish an institutional mechanism for oversight.
- **Strengthen internal vigilance** within the judiciary like internal ethics committees.
- Ensure **non-partisan approach** to uphold the **dignity and independence** of the judiciary.

Conclusion:

The initiation of impeachment proceedings against Justice Yashwant Varma is a rare and significant event in Indian constitutional history. While it is a step toward **judicial accountability**, it must be handled with **care, transparency, and fairness** to maintain the **delicate balance between judicial independence and parliamentary oversight**.

UPSC Prelims Practice Question

Ques: Which of the following is NOT a requirement under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 for initiating impeachment of a High Court judge?

- A. Motion must be signed by at least 100 Lok Sabha members or 50 Rajya Sabha members
- B. The President must approve the motion before it is submitted
- C. Inquiry committee must consist of a Supreme Court judge, a High Court Chief Justice, and a jurist
- D. Both Houses must admit the motion before inquiry starts

Ans: B.

Human activities such as groundwater extraction, dam construction, mining, and energy extraction are increasingly being linked to **induced seismicity** — earthquakes triggered by human actions rather than natural tectonic movements. This trend poses growing challenges to seismic risk management, especially in seismically active and densely populated regions like Delhi-NCR and the Himalayas.

Water, energy demand spotlights risk of human-induced quakes

Mining, extracting groundwater, impounding water behind a dam, injecting fluids into the ground, and engineering coastal structures have been shown to induce seismic activity. This is because loading and unloading the crust in a repeated manner can cause strain to accumulate underground

Nivedita S.

Earthquakes are usually natural — but not always. Sometimes some natural factors can combine with human activities to lead to earthquakes as well. Quakes induced by human activities are called human-induced earthquakes. According to one estimate researchers discussed in *Seismological Research Letters* in 2017, more than 700 human-induced earthquakes have been recorded around the world in the last 150 years, and they are becoming more common.

Human activities like mining, extracting groundwater, impounding water behind a dam, injecting fluids into the ground, constructing tall buildings, and engineering coastal structures, among others, have been shown to induce seismic activity. This is because, according to experts, loading and unloading the crust in a repeated manner can cause strain to accumulate between tectonic plates, which would in turn modulate seismic activity.

In India, seismologists have also been studying how the amount of water above and below the ground can affect the geological processes.

A 2021 study in *Scientific Reports* noted that shallow earthquakes recorded in the National Capital Region could be linked to excessive groundwater extraction in the region for farming and human consumption.

"It was seen that between 2003 and 2012, when the water table had depleted significantly, there was an increase in seismic activity. The seismic activity reduced after 2014 when the water table stabilised," Bhaskar Kundu, associate professor at NIT Rourkela and one of the authors of the study, told *The Hindu*.

Managing extraction

When groundwater is pumped out, the mass of water maintaining the pressure under the earth is removed, creating jolts on the surface.

"The situation is not of major concern because these earthquakes in the Delhi-NCR region are usually minor, with the maximum going up to 4.5 magnitude," C.P. Rajendran, geoscientist and author of *The Rumbling Earth: The Story of Indian Earthquakes*, said. "It can go up to 5.5, which for a densely populated city like Delhi could have risks."

This is because Delhi lies on several faultlines and is in the Zone 4 seismic risk category, meaning it's a quake-prone region.

The risk for earthquakes induced by groundwater extraction is spread across the Gangetic plains, where the water table has been dropping in leaps, Dr. Rajendran said. This is mostly because crops sown in the region still need large quantities of water and very little of that thirst is quenched by rainfall.

He added that there is a need to manage the rate of groundwater extraction and its recharge in a scientific manner and while considering the rate of seismic activity in the region.

In the past, human-induced earthquakes have devastated lives and property, caused foremost by large dams that change the water load on the surface. On December 11, 1967, for example, an earthquake of 6.3 magnitude wrought



An earthquake of 6.3 magnitude wrought significant damage in Koynanagar in Maharashtra in 1967. Several studies that followed blamed the disaster on water overloading in the Koyna hydroelectric dam nearby. [SOURCE: \(CC-BY-SA\)](https://www.scribd.com/document/405494086/CC-BY-SA)

significant damage in Koynanagar, a village in Maharashtra. More than 180 people were killed and thousands of houses were destroyed. Several studies that followed blamed the disaster on water overloading in the Koyna hydroelectric dam nearby.

Similarly, research has recorded an increase in seismic activity around the Mullaperiyar dam in Idukki, Kerala, which like Delhi also lies in an earthquake-prone zone.

Energy and quakes

"The U.S., which has recorded reservoir-induced earthquakes, has implemented regulations on how quickly a dam should be filled and emptied."

Such regulations should also be enforced in India to prevent earthquakes," Vineet K. Gahalaut, Chief Scientist at the National Geophysical Research Institute, told *The Hindu*.

He also said seismic activities in a region should be properly evaluated before a dam is built there.

"Huge dams in seismically active areas like the Himalayas are not recommended because the water load and percolation could change the local stress regime," Dr. Rajendran said.

India's growing energy demand also increases the risk of this type of disaster.

"The methods used to extract energy to meet our needs have significant risks on our earth, be it oil or hydropower," Dr. Gahalaut said.

Fracking — where liquids are injected into the ground to push rocks apart and allow extraction of oil and natural gas — has also been shown to induce



The U.S. has implemented regulations on how quickly a dam should be filled and emptied. Such regulations should also be enforced in India

VINEET K. GAHALAUT,
Chief Scientist at the National Geophysical Research Institute

earthquakes, Dr. Gahalaut added. India currently has 56 fracking sites across six States. In Palghar district in Maharashtra, which has been experiencing a sequence of quakes since 2018, experts have said plate deformation is occurring in an isolated manner. Initial findings by seismologists indicated that the cause could be fluid migration due to rainfall.

"Strong seismic networks using instruments need to be established across India in regions like these, which are experiencing isolated plate deformation, to monitor and track seismic activity more accurately," Dr. Kundu said.

Impact of climate change

Scientists have said that climate change can indirectly affect the occurrence of earthquakes and render them more frequent over time. The melting of glaciers due to global warming has been found to trigger earthquakes around Antarctica and Greenland. Changes in rainfall patterns due to climate change have also been known to modulate the water loading process on the surface. For example, sudden heavy rainfall

could alter the stress accumulated between tectonic plates and induce seismic activity.

The area around the Sahyadri range of the Western Ghats has been recording tremors due to heavy rainfall for this reason.

"The height of the mountains should have been reduced considering the rate of rainfall. However, the mountains have maintained their height due to seismic activity," Dr. Gahalaut said.

Changing rainfall patterns can also change the soil chemistry, Dr. Rajendran said, affecting cropping patterns and compelling farmers to turn to groundwater for irrigation, which can also induce seismic activity.

Similarly, longer droughts can also reactivate seismic faults. Such a drought-induced earthquake was recorded in California in 2014.

"The risk of earthquakes is not present at all locations where there is groundwater depletion or huge dams. They have only been recorded in areas that are present on faultlines or are facing plate deformation processes," according to Dr. Kundu.

At present, the rate at which strain has been accumulating along plates and the fraction of this stress that is due to human activities is not possible to ascertain, he added. Experts have thus warned against concluding that such activities are solely to blame for tremors or earthquakes. Research thus far has only shown that these activities could postpone or accelerate tectonic processes causing these movements. (nivedita.s@thehindu.co.in)

What Are Human-Induced Earthquakes?

- Earthquakes triggered directly or indirectly due to human activities such as:
 - Groundwater extraction
 - Dam construction and reservoir impoundment
 - Mining and fracking
 - Fluid injection (oil/gas extraction or waste disposal)
 - Heavy infrastructure and urban construction
- A 2017 study published in *Seismological Research Letters* estimated **over 700 human-induced earthquakes globally** in the past 150 years.

Examples from India:

Koyna Earthquake, 1967 (Maharashtra):

- Magnitude: 6.3
- Cause: Reservoir-induced seismicity (RIS) from the Koyna dam
- Over 180 deaths and thousands of structures destroyed

Delhi-NCR Groundwater Extraction:

- **2003–2012:** Excessive depletion of groundwater saw a rise in seismic events
- **Post-2014:** Stabilization of water table led to reduced seismic activity

Mullaperiyar Dam (Kerala):

- Increased seismic activity reported near dam
- Region lies in seismically sensitive zone

Palghar, Maharashtra:

- Recurrent tremors since 2018 possibly linked to fluid migration due to rainfall

Mechanisms Behind Induced Seismicity:

- **Load-Unload Stress on Crust:**
 - Repeated loading (e.g., dams) and unloading (e.g., water extraction) alters stress between tectonic plates.
- **Groundwater Extraction:**
 - Removes subterranean support; crust settles, creating small or moderate tremors.

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- **Reservoir-Induced Seismicity (RIS):**
 - Rapid filling/emptying of dams increases water pressure, destabilizing faults.
- **Fracking & Fluid Injection:**
 - Introduces high-pressure fluids into faults, triggering slip events.

Link with Energy and Climate:

- **Energy Demand:**
 - Hydropower and fossil fuel extraction (especially fracking) increase seismic risks.
- **Climate Change:**
 - Glacial melt in regions like Greenland has triggered quakes.
 - Heavy rainfall → abrupt surface loading → stress alterations.
 - Droughts have reactivated faults (e.g., California, 2014).

Risks & Vulnerabilities:

- **Urban Risk Zones:**
 - Delhi-NCR is in Seismic Zone IV (high risk), but still witnesses over-extraction of groundwater.
- **Himalayan Dams:**
 - Construction of mega-dams in seismically active zones increases quake vulnerability.
- **Agricultural Practices:**
 - High water-demand crops + declining rainfall → over-extraction → induced stress.

Policy & Regulatory Gaps:

- Lack of:
 - Scientific groundwater management
 - Seismic pre-evaluation for dams
 - Guidelines on rate of dam filling/emptying
 - Strong seismic monitoring infrastructure
- **Example:** The U.S. enforces such dam regulations; India currently does not.

Recommendations & Way Forward:

1. **Scientific Groundwater Management:**
 - Monitor extraction-recharge cycles; integrate with seismic data.
2. **Mandatory Seismic Risk Assessments:**
 - For infrastructure in faultline-prone regions (dams, cities, industries)
3. **Regulate Dam Operations:**

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- Enforce protocols for reservoir filling and emptying to reduce stress changes.
- 4. **Fracking Regulations:**
 - Monitor fracking zones for induced seismicity; limit fracking in seismic zones.
- 5. **Expand Seismic Monitoring:**
 - Install dense seismic networks, especially in regions showing isolated deformation.
- 6. **Climate-Adaptive Planning:**
 - Account for rainfall-induced stress and drought in seismic risk maps.

Conclusion:

While natural tectonic processes remain the primary cause of most earthquakes, **human-induced seismicity is a growing concern**, especially in **densely populated and geologically sensitive regions** of India. As **energy and water demands rise**, it is critical to adopt **scientific, regulatory, and climate-resilient approaches** to infrastructure development, resource extraction, and disaster preparedness.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Earthquakes are not always natural events. Increasing anthropogenic activities have raised the risk of induced seismicity in India. (150 Words)



The possibility of a renewed **U.S.-Israel-Iran conflict** poses a serious challenge to India's strategic interests and its **aspiration for great power status**. While India seeks deeper cooperation with the U.S. to counterbalance China, it also supports a **multipolar global order** that contrasts with **U.S.-led unipolarity**. The Iran crisis thus becomes a critical litmus test for India's **strategic autonomy**.

The threat to India's 'great power' status

Despite U.S. President Donald Trump's claims of having vanquished Iran's enrichment programme, the threat of a U.S.-Israel-Iran war remains alive. A combination of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's legal problems, his government's regional agenda, and the neoconservative influence in the U.S. threaten to overwhelm Mr. Trump's instincts towards non-interventionist peace.

War would be disastrous for India's economic interests and harm its 'great power' ambitions. If Iran's government is toppled, U.S.-led unipolarity in West Asia would be cemented, precluding the ability of rising powers such as India to grow their strategic footprint. This touches on a fundamental schism between India and the West – Delhi's multipolar world vision. The Trump administration offers an opportunity to address this.

What Iran's defeat could mean

A restart of the Israel-Iran war with U.S. involvement poses some risk of regime change or Balkanization in Iran. This would dramatically alter the distribution of power in West Asia. There would remain no nation state that is both not U.S.-aligned and controls all of its territory (Ansar Allah does not control all Yemen). Regardless of how benign U.S. intentions towards India are, this would imperil the trajectory Delhi has been following for the last decade, of strengthening its strategic influence in the region. The negotiating power India held with Israel and Gulf States was underpinned by the fact that Delhi also engaged alternatively aligned states such as Syria and Iran. This has already decreased since President Bashar al-Assad's toppling and would nosedive if Iran's government is ousted.

All of India's West Asia energy imports would have to be sourced from governments dependent on U.S. security guarantees, rather than from the diverse mix Delhi



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draws on now.

All this would harm India's ability to rise as a great power. This is in part because reinforcing the strength of the existing global hegemon, the U.S., means a relative weakening of all rising powers. But it is also due to a fundamental clash in world visions between the American hegemon and rising India.

Before his Moscow visit, India's External Affairs Minister revealed the basis of this clash saying the meeting with Russia would discuss "...the building of a multipolar world order". By definition, this involves the displacement of U.S.-led unipolarity. This means that, on this crucial question, Washington's most important Asian partner shares common cause with China and Russia.

This underlying tension bubbled to the surface recently with Mr. Trump's threat, cheered on by NATO head Mark Rutte, to slap secondary sanctions of 100% on countries purchasing Russian oil, gas, or other strategic goods. Before this, when India commissioned INS Tamal, a warship manufactured by Russia, the U.K. paper, *The Telegraph*, ran the headline 'India is an enemy, not a friend or a neutral'. When it comes to fundamental questions of geopolitics, the corporate media in the West reflects the views of the foreign policy establishment.

A multipolar world order, in which India is one of the poles, constitutes one of the principal pillars of New Delhi's foreign policy. India's main motivation for supporting partnering with the U.S. – balancing against the China threat – does not outweigh the multipolarity goal. This shapes India's interests, not only in relation to Iran and to West Asia, but also the New Cold War more broadly and the hot wars that will in future spring from it. It has been most clear in India's defiance of Western demands regarding isolating Russia.

Going forward, the multipolarity goal will play a

greater role in informing Delhi's policy choices, thus inhibiting actions that reinforce U.S.-led unipolarity. Therefore, even given the existing strategic autonomy preference, it looks *increasingly less likely* that India will align with the Western bloc. Moreover, Delhi likely perceives its clashing worldview with Washington as amplifying U.S. and Western offensive intentions towards India.

Path to peace

On Iran, India should urge restraint. This can include highlighting that disruption of West Asian oil supplies would weaken India relative to China, which is less dependent on imports – thus harming U.S. interests in Asia. It may also involve *quid pro quo*. As seen in relation to U.S. attempts to isolate Russia over Ukraine, where India sits on any conflict can impact the collective West's interests.

More fundamentally, India should impress on Washington that the U.S. and its allies can best serve their security and economic interests by accepting global multipolarity. When considering the alternatives of kinetic great power war, or (though less likely) Chinese hegemony over Asia and Africa, multipolarity is far from the worst scenario from the West's view.

The present moment offers possibility in this regard. Despite the recent dithering on detente with Russia, Mr. Trump knows he was elected on a compatible foreign policy platform of non-interventionism. Secretary of State Marco Rubio acknowledged early on that the world is moving towards multipolarity. Polls show that Americans, particularly Mr. Trump's base, view the country's vital interests as homeland and near abroad-centred. This translates to tolerance of other poles maintaining hegemony within their own regions.

As the most powerful independent state that the U.S. regards as a partner, Indian suasion would carry weight.

India should urge the U.S. to tolerate Iran in West Asia and accept multipolarity globally

Key Issues Highlighted:

1. Impact of Regime Change in Iran on India:

- A **U.S.-backed collapse or Balkanization of Iran** would remove the last major **non-U.S.-aligned power** in West Asia.

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- India's strategic influence is supported by its **balancing act** — maintaining ties with **both U.S.-aligned Gulf states and independent actors** like Iran.
- Loss of Iran would limit India's **negotiating power and diplomatic space** in the region.

2. Threat to Energy Security:

- India's energy strategy depends on **diverse import sources**.
- A **homogenized West Asia**, aligned solely with U.S. interests, would force India to **depend exclusively on pro-U.S. suppliers**, increasing vulnerability.

3. Clash of Worldviews – Multipolarity vs. Unipolarity:

- India's foreign policy rests on **multipolarity**, evident from EAM's statement during Russia visit.
- A **multipolar world** includes diverse power centers — Russia, China, India — and not a **U.S.-dominated global order**.
- This creates inherent tension in India-U.S. ties, despite strategic convergence over China.

4. U.S. Secondary Sanctions and Western Pressure:

- Threat of **secondary sanctions on Russian imports**, including India's Russian warships and energy, underscores **Western coercive diplomacy**.
- UK media labeling India "an enemy" after Russian arms purchase reflects deeper distrust in Western strategic circles.

5. Strategic Autonomy Under Pressure:

- India's refusal to isolate Russia after the Ukraine war reflects its **independent stance**.
- Increasing geopolitical pressure may test India's **balancing ability** in future conflicts.

India's Policy Options and Recommendations:

1. Advocate Restraint on Iran:

- Emphasize the **destabilizing effects of war** on global oil supply.
- Point out that it **disproportionately affects India**, while **China is relatively insulated** — making conflict **counterproductive to U.S. interests in Asia**.

2. Highlight the Costs of Unipolarity:

- Argue that **global stability** is better served under **multipolarity** than through **U.S. military hegemony**.
- Use its position as a **"friendly yet independent" partner** to influence U.S. thinking.

3. Deepen Regional Engagement:

- Rebuild strategic ties with **Iran and Syria** where possible.
- Continue strengthening links with **Gulf powers and Israel**, maintaining a **multi-vector engagement policy**.

4. Enhance Role in Multilateral Forums:

- Use platforms like **BRICS, SCO, G20**, and **Global South coalitions** to push for multipolarity.
- Position itself as a **global consensus-builder** amid rival power blocs.

Broader Geopolitical Implications:

- **India's identity as a "great power"** requires it to **assert global leadership**, not merely act as a **junior partner to the West**.
- The **new Cold War dynamic** makes it critical for India to preserve **strategic flexibility**, especially amid growing **U.S.-China bipolar competition**.
- The **Iran situation is a microcosm** of the broader **challenges facing Indian foreign policy**: balancing **realism and idealism, partnership and autonomy**.

Conclusion:

India's pursuit of **great power status** cannot be divorced from its foundational principle of **strategic autonomy** and its **vision for a multipolar world order**. As crises in West Asia and beyond test global alignments, India must walk a fine line — leveraging partnerships without compromising sovereignty. In doing so, **New Delhi can emerge not just as a regional power**, but as a **credible pole in an evolving global order**.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Discuss how the evolving geopolitical dynamics in West Asia, particularly the possibility of a U.S.-Iran conflict, threaten India's strategic interests and its vision of a multipolar world order. **(250 Words)**

Despite a general rise in private school enrolment in India over the past decade, **boys continue to outnumber girls**, especially in **northern and western States**. This trend highlights the **persistent gender bias in educational access and parental investment**.

Boys continue to outnumber girls in private schools

In the northern and western States, the share of girls enrolled in any school is lower than India's average of 48.1%.

DATA POINT

Devayani Bihani
Vignesh Radhakrishnan

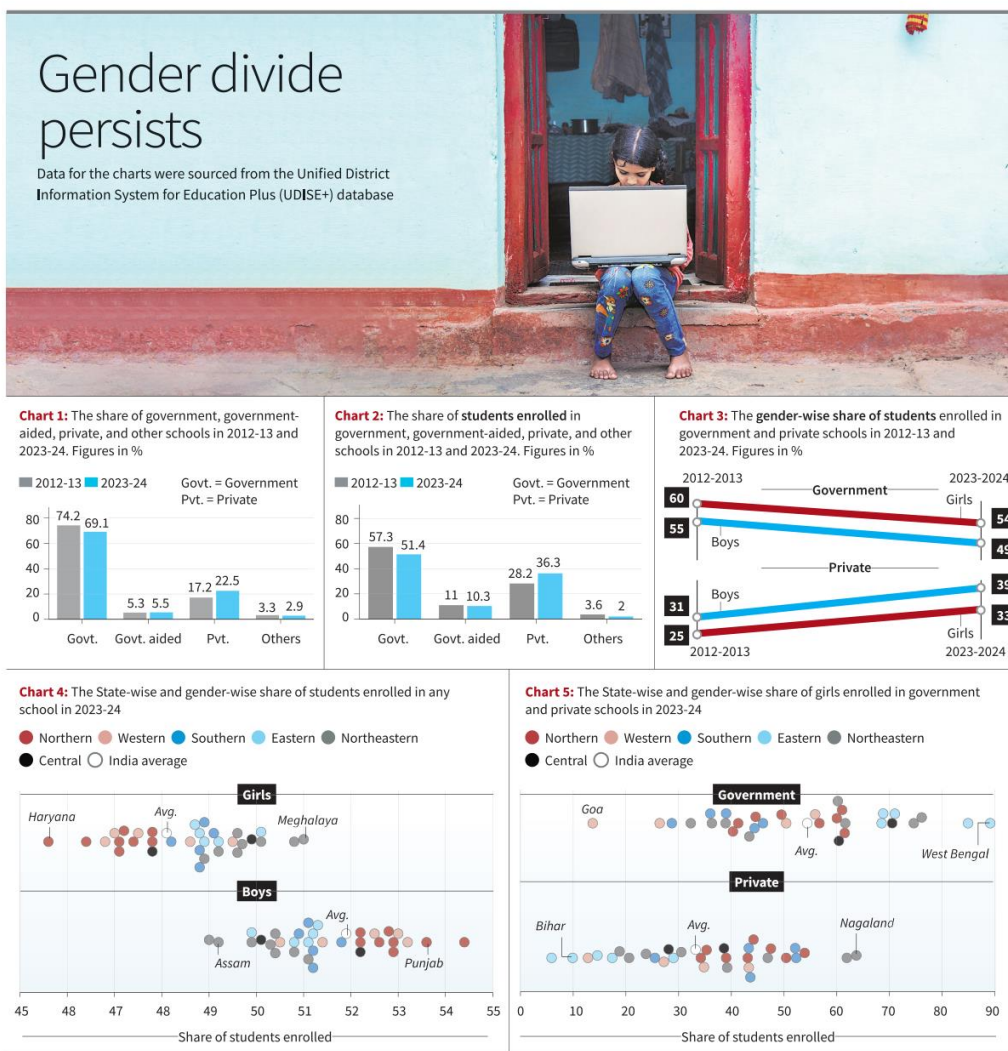
Over the past decade, the share of private schools and the proportion of boys and girls enrolled in them have both increased across India, likely reinforcing each other. However, the share of girls attending private schools remains considerably lower than that of boys. In other words, while parents increasingly prefer private schooling, a considerable share of them still shows a slight preference for enrolling their sons over their daughters. Also, a relatively low number of girls are enrolled compared to boys in schools across northern and western India.

Chart 1 shows the share of government, government-aided, private, and other schools in 2012-13 and 2023-24. The share of government schools has fallen from 74.2% to 69.1%, whereas the share of private schools has increased from 17.2% to 22.5%.

Chart 2 shows the share of students enrolled in government, government-aided, private, and other schools in 2012-13 and 2023-24. The share of children enrolled in government schools has fallen from 57.3% to 51.4%, whereas the share of private schools has increased from 28.2% to 36.3%.

Chart 3 shows the gender-wise share of students enrolled in government and private schools in 2012-13 and 2023-24. For instance, in 2023-24, 54% of girls studied in government schools, while 49% of all boys studied in government schools and 39% in private schools.

Chart 4 shows the State-wise and gender-wise share of students enrolled in any school. In the northern and western States, the share of girls enrolled in any school is lower than India's average of 48.1%.



Key Data Highlights:

Shift Towards Private Schools:

- Share of **private schools** increased from **17.2% (2012-13)** to **22.5% (2023-24)**.
- Share of **students enrolled** in private schools rose from **28.2% to 36.3%**.
- Simultaneously, **government schools' share** declined in both number and enrolment.

Gender Disparities in Enrolment (2023-24):

- **Girls:**
 - 54% enrolled in government schools
 - 33% in private schools
- **Boys:**
 - 49% in government schools
 - 39% in private schools
- **National average of girls enrolled across all schools: 48.1%**
 - **Below average in northern and western States**

Underlying Issues:

1. Gender Bias in Educational Investment:

- **Sons are often prioritized** for better schooling options like private institutions due to:
 - Perception of higher ROI (Return on Investment)
 - Societal expectations for male breadwinners
 - Dowry practices and belief in daughters' short-term household roles

2. Regional Disparities:

- **Northern & Western States** (e.g., Rajasthan, UP, Gujarat) show below-average enrolment of girls.
- Reflects **entrenched patriarchal norms** and **educational inequities** in these regions.

3. Economic Barriers:

- **Private school costs** deter many parents from enrolling daughters.
- Girls are often enrolled in **free or low-cost government schools**, even when families opt for private schools for boys.

Implications:

- **Long-term Gender Inequality:**
 - Access to quality education is a key determinant of **future economic and social mobility**.
 - Unequal investment widens gender gaps in employment, earnings, and empowerment.
- **Threat to SDG 4 & SDG 5:**
 - Hinders goals of **inclusive and equitable education** (SDG 4)
 - Undermines efforts towards **gender equality** (SDG 5)
- **Social Justice Concerns:**
 - Denial of equal opportunity violates **Article 14** (Equality before law) and **Article 21A** (Right to Education).

Policy Recommendations:

1. Incentivize Girl Education in Private Schools:

- Extend **scholarships/subsidies** for private school education of girls from low-income households.
- Introduce **targeted voucher systems** in high-gap districts.

2. Social Awareness Campaigns:

- Promote **value of educating girls** through media, panchayats, and school management committees.

3. Improve Quality of Government Schools:

- Enhance infrastructure, teaching quality, and safety in public schools to make them more attractive for both genders.

4. State-Specific Interventions:

- Focus on **north-western states** with cultural and historical bias.
- Leverage **district-level gender parity indices** for tailored action.

5. Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):

- Encourage **low-cost private schooling** with accountability on gender parity metrics.

Conclusion:

The data underscores how **social norms continue to dictate educational choices**, with girls being **systematically underrepresented in private education**. As India aspires to build a knowledge economy, it must **correct gender biases** in foundational sectors like education. Ensuring **equal access to quality education** is not just a matter of justice — it is a strategic imperative for inclusive development.

UPSC Mains Practice Question

Ques: Despite improvements in overall school enrolment, gender disparities persist in private school admissions across India, especially in northern and western States. Discuss the underlying causes of this trend and suggest policy measures to address it. **(250 Words)**



Page : 08 Editorial Analysis

At FTA's heart, the promise of Global Capacity Centres

As the United Kingdom and India move steadily toward signing of their historic Free Trade Agreement (FTA), there is growing recognition of the FTA's potential to redefine bilateral economic engagement. Among the most promising areas of collaboration is the rapidly evolving ecosystem of Global Capability Centres (GCCs) – a sector where India leads, and the U.K. can be a pivotal partner.

India is already home to more than 1,500 GCCs, employing over 1.9 million people and contributing significantly to the global innovation and digital transformation agendas of multinational corporations. Increasingly, British companies are looking to India not just as a cost-effective back office, but as a strategic partner for research and development, analytics, cybersecurity, and emerging tech solutions.

The FTA could be a catalyst for deeper engagement in this space. By easing regulatory barriers, facilitating smoother movement of professionals, and harmonising digital and data governance standards, the agreement can support the expansion of GCCs that serve U.K.-headquartered businesses – or leverage British expertise to serve global markets from India.

Much potential

The U.K.'s Foreign Secretary David Lammy visited India within weeks of his taking office, demonstrating commitment towards the partnership with the U.K. The Business and Trade Secretary, Jonathan Reynolds' visit ahead of resuming FTA negotiations, following suit. At the UK India Business Council (UKIBC), we think that there is real potential to further increase our trade, investment, and wider partnership. Prime Ministers Keir Starmer and Narendra Modi also had an extremely productive meeting at the G-20 Summit in Brazil, in 2024, agreeing to take the relationship to new heights.

From the U.K.'s perspective, the FTA is a timely opportunity to secure access to one of the world's fastest-growing digital economies, while reinforcing its global services and innovation



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The United Kingdom-India Free Trade Agreement could be a catalyst for deeper engagement in the GCCs, a rapidly evolving ecosystem

footprint post-Brexit. For India, greater U.K. investment and collaboration in the GCC space aligns perfectly with its digital economy ambitions, skilling objectives, and goal of becoming a global hub for high-value services.

The UKIBC has long championed the idea that the future of trade lies not just in goods but also in the services, skills and technology that power the new global economy. The GCCs stand at the intersection of all three.

The FTA can pave the way for easier cross-border collaboration, robust intellectual property frameworks, and smart mobility solutions that allow talent to move where it is most needed.

A well-crafted agreement can also address the practical challenges businesses face such as double taxation, data localisation mandates and misaligned standards, that often inhibit the scaling of GCCs. Addressing these through the FTA, or individually, will send a strong signal to investors and businesses in both nations.

According to a white paper released by Deloitte India, the country is making strides in the global GCC game, as India-based GCCs have emerged as strategic hubs for multinational companies to manage complex global tax operations, including corporate tax, indirect tax, transfer pricing, and litigation,

India's current policy environment is highly conducive for GCC growth, even without a dedicated national GCC policy at the moment. The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has formed an industry-led panel – including the National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM), Zinnov, KPMG, and Invest India – to design the national GCC framework outlined in Budget 2025. Its goal is to guide States in promoting GCCs, improving talent, infrastructure, innovation, and legal facilitation.

State government policies

Other than central government endeavours, we also see State governments rolling out landmark policies. Uttar Pradesh hosted its first "GCC

Conclave" under Invest UP, bringing together policymakers and industry heavyweights (Microsoft, TCS, HCL, Standard Chartered). The event showcased U.P.'s infrastructure, incentives, and intent to host GCCs beyond National Capital Region cities, in Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur and Prayagraj.

In this context, the UKIBC recently held a closed-door consultation to bring together a distinguished group of leaders and experts to explore the expanding role of GCCs in driving innovation and economic growth in India. The group deliberated on a set of recommendations including global best practices from a governance perspective to help India achieve its economic ambitions set for GCCs. It also discussed these: whether there is a need for a dedicated national GCC policy now; whether organic growth from the past is best achieved in the absence of any such policies; or if having multiple State-level policies create unwanted competition instead of overall national progress. The need for honing talent diversity as well as skilfully managing the diversity of GCC's themselves, was also underscored.

Some of the legal hurdles and the market outlook was touched upon, with some practical experiences of Indian and U.K. companies being shared. Additionally, the overall impact of India's economic diplomacy efforts through FTAs on the Indian GCC ecosystem was touched on. These included aspects of how the U.K.-India FTA can be leveraged to help Indian GCCs climb up the global value chain, with a focus on talent diversity in terms of professional mobility across the two countries.

A knowledge corridor

As the two governments fine-tune the final provisions, industry leaders must continue to voice the importance of services, digital trade and mobility – the lifelines of modern commerce. GCCs, in particular, stand to gain from – and contribute to – this evolving partnership, shaping a resilient, knowledge-based corridor between the U.K. and India.

Paper 02 International Relations

UPSC Mains Practice Question: The India-U.K. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) has the potential to transform bilateral relations beyond trade in goods." Discuss with reference to the role of Global Capacity Centres (GCCs). (250 words)

Context :

As India and the U.K. inch closer to a Free Trade Agreement (FTA), a key emerging pillar of bilateral collaboration is the **Global Capability Centres (GCCs)**. The agreement is poised to not just boost trade in goods but also enable services, digital cooperation, and innovation.

What are GCCs?

- **Global Capability Centres (GCCs)** are offshore units of multinational corporations that handle high-value business functions like:
 - R&D, analytics, cybersecurity
 - Digital transformation, finance & tax operations
 - HR, legal and innovation hubs
- **India's Leadership:**
 - Over **1,500 GCCs** employing **1.9 million+** professionals.
 - Transitioned from cost centres to **strategic value hubs**.
 - Increasingly preferred by **UK businesses** for digital and innovation-related roles.

Role of the India-UK FTA:

Opportunities:

1. **Facilitating Professional Mobility:**
 - Easing **visa restrictions** and enabling smoother **movement of skilled talent**.
2. **Digital & Data Governance Alignment:**
 - Harmonising **data laws**, IP frameworks, and **cybersecurity standards**.
3. **Addressing Trade Barriers:**
 - Tackling issues like **double taxation**, **data localisation**, and **regulatory bottlenecks**.

Strategic Value for the U.K.:

- Access to **India's digital economy**, a **young tech-savvy workforce**, and a **post-Brexit diversification strategy**.

Strategic Value for India:

- Enhances **FDI**, **digital skilling**, and **global services exports**.
- Aligns with **Budget 2025's** focus on creating a **national GCC policy framework**.

Policy & Institutional Developments:

Central Government Initiatives:

- MeitY-led industry task force (NASSCOM, KPMG, Zinnov) is crafting a **National GCC Policy** to promote:
 - Talent pipeline
 - Innovation ecosystem
 - Legal and infrastructural ease

State-level Engagements:

- **Uttar Pradesh's GCC Conclave** (Lucknow, Kanpur, Varanasi, Prayagraj)
 - Showcases decentralised industrial development beyond metros.
 - States now competing to attract GCC investments.

Key Issues and Debates:

1. Policy Fragmentation:

- Risk of **conflicting State-level policies** vs. need for a **cohesive national framework**.

2. Skilling and Talent Diversity:

- Need for investment in **domain-specific upskilling**, women's participation, and **global business readiness**.

3. Legal and Tax Challenges:

- **Double taxation, data flow restrictions, and complex compliance norms** hinder GCC scalability.

Strategic Recommendations:

1. Embed Services & Talent Mobility into FTA:

- Prioritise **cross-border service delivery** and **visa liberalisation** for professionals.

2. Finalise and Implement a National GCC Policy:

- Central vision to **guide States**, encourage **complementarity** not competition.

3. Foster a UK-India Knowledge Corridor:

- Institutionalise R&D exchange, joint skilling programs, and innovation hubs.

4. Address Practical Challenges:

- Simplify tax codes, ensure data transfer agreements, promote ease of doing business.

Conclusion:

The India-U.K. FTA is not merely a trade deal — it is a **gateway to the services economy of the future**. Global Capability Centres sit at the **nexus of technology, services, and talent**, and offer a real opportunity to deepen this strategic partnership. By investing in digital alignment and human capital mobility, both nations can create a **resilient knowledge economy** poised for global leadership.

