

# The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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On August 5, 2025, devastating flash floods struck Dharali town in Uttarkashi district, Uttarakhand, killing at least 4 people, with dozens missing. Triggered by torrential rainfall, the floods caused massive destruction to infrastructure and tourism-dependent livelihoods, highlighting the fragile nature of Himalayan ecosystems.

# Flash floods in Uttarakhand leave four dead

Many feared washed away after water from Kheer Ganga river swept through Dharali in Uttarkashi

Local authorities estimate that around 60-70 people are missing or trapped in the area

Nine Army personnel feared missing, 20 people rescued in first three hours, Army officer says

**Ishita Mishra**  
NEW DELHI

At least four persons were killed and dozens feared washed away in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand after flash floods triggered by torrential rain hit the Kheer Ganga river on Tuesday afternoon.

The floods hit hotels and residential buildings in Dharali town, situated 8,600 feet above sea level, where video footage recorded by residents showed giant waves of water gushing through the area and swallowing everything in their way, including people and homes. Residents were heard yelling warnings to their acquaintances to run for their lives. The entire market area of the popular tourist town was washed away in minutes, leaving the

place looking like a sludge-filled river bed.

At least 25 establishments, including hotels, guest houses, and homes were completely destroyed. A rough estimate by the district administration says that around 60-70 people are missing or might be trapped in the area. As many as nine Army personnel are feared missing, said Lieutenant-Colonel Manish Shrivastava, the Army's Public Relations Officer at Dehradun. Army rescued around 20 people in the first three hours of the rescue operation, he added.

## Heavy losses

Uttarkashi District Magistrate Prashant Arya said that the town, which hit the town around 1.45 p.m., had caused heavy losses of life and property.

Sources in the Indo-Ti-



**Blink of an eye:** A series of images shows floodwater surging downhill and destroying buildings in Dharali town, located 8,600 feet above sea level, in Uttarakhand, on Tuesday. PTI

betan Border Police (ITBP) in the area said that 32 people were rescued by different teams.

As many as 120 people were rescued and given first aid till the time of filing this report.

The administration has

also set up relief camps for those affected. Hospitals in the area have been asked to reserve a separate wing for the treatment of injured people, and medical teams have been asked to be ready with beds, oxygen, and medicines.

"There has been heavy destruction in the area around the Harshil helipad, another popular tourist spot which also houses an Army and [Indo-Tibetan Border Police] ITBP camp. Teams of State Disaster Response Force, Army and

ITBP were immediately rushed to the spot to carry out rescue operations on a war footing," Mr. Arya said.

Given the poor weather conditions and further predictions of heavy rains over the next couple of days, the administration has announced that all schools will be shut on July 6.

Disaster management officials have been asked to use loudspeakers and sirens to alert people living in villages near the river, in the Chilyanisaur, Bhatwari, and Dunda blocks, asking them to evacuate their homes for safer locations. Trekking permits in Uttarkashi have also been denied until further notice.

## CM condoles losses

Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami condoned the losses and ordered the administration

to ensure speedy rescue and rehabilitation. "I am in constant contact with senior officials, and the situation is being closely monitored. I pray to God for everyone's safety," the CM said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah also spoke to Mr. Dhami and took stock of the situation and the rescue operation. The Union government has assured the State of its help in the rescue efforts.

Hours after Dharali, information of flash floods triggered by rains was received from Sukhi top, another tourists destination in Uttarkashi, said Vinay Shankar Pandey, divisional commissioner of Garhwal region. He added that no loss of life was reported from the spot but the water level in the river increased drastically.

## Causes of the Disaster

- 1. Extreme Rainfall Events:** The immediate trigger was cloudburst-like torrential rains, a recurring phenomenon in the Himalayas due to monsoonal variability and climate change.
- 2. Topographical and Geological Vulnerability:**
  - Uttarkashi is situated at 8,600 feet with steep slopes and fragile geology, making it highly prone to landslides and flash floods.
  - The Kheer Ganga river, a tributary prone to rapid swelling, overflowed and swept through the town.
- 3. Unregulated Tourism and Construction:**
  - The town of Dharali is a popular tourist destination, with multiple hotels and guest houses constructed along riverbanks and unstable slopes.
  - Haphazard construction exacerbated the scale of destruction.

#### 4. Climate Change:

- The increased frequency of high-intensity rainfall in short durations is a clear manifestation of changing climate patterns in the Himalayan region.

#### Impact

- **Human Loss:**

- At least 4 confirmed deaths; 60–70 people missing, including 9 Army personnel.
- Over 120 people rescued; hospitals prepared for emergency medical care.

- **Infrastructure Destruction:**

- Over 25 hotels, guesthouses, and homes destroyed.
- Roads, markets, and local communication lines affected.

- **Displacement:**

- Relief camps set up; schools shut; trekking permits cancelled.
- Evacuations ordered in nearby villages.

- **National Response:**

- Army, ITBP, SDRF teams deployed on war footing.
- PM and Home Minister in touch with CM; Centre assures support.

#### Administrative and Policy Challenges

- **Disaster Preparedness Gaps:**

- Lack of early warning systems in remote high-altitude areas.
- Inadequate pre-monsoon vulnerability mapping.

- **Policy Implementation Weakness:**

- Violations of eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) guidelines.
- Poor enforcement of construction norms in fragile zones.

#### Way Forward

1. **Strengthening Early Warning Systems:**

- Installation of automated rain and flood monitoring stations in upper catchments.

2. **Sustainable Tourism and Zoning Laws:**

- Enforce strict building codes.
- Carrying capacity-based tourism planning in ecologically fragile areas.

3. **Watershed and River Management:**

- Riverbed zoning and embankment strengthening.
- Desilting and drainage system improvement.

4. **Community-Based Disaster Preparedness:**

- Local-level mock drills, awareness campaigns.
- Training of youth in rescue and first-aid.

**5. Climate Adaptation Planning:**

- Integrate climate risk assessment into State Disaster Management Plans (SDMP).
- Promote nature-based solutions like afforestation and slope stabilization.

**Conclusion**

The Uttarkashi flash floods once again underscore the need for a holistic and climate-resilient approach to Himalayan development. As India aims to balance ecological preservation and economic progress, lessons from such disasters must inform sustainable policy design, community participation, and disaster readiness.

**UPSC Mains Practice Question**

**Ques:** Flash floods are becoming increasingly frequent in the Himalayan region. To what extent can this be attributed to climate change? Examine with reference to recent incidents and suggest policy interventions. **(150 Words)**





On the visit of Filipino President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to India, both nations elevated their bilateral ties to a strategic partnership, focusing on defence, maritime security, trade, and regional cooperation.

### Key Developments:

#### 1. Strategic Partnership Formalised:

- India and the Philippines upgraded ties from a comprehensive partnership to a strategic partnership.
- A detailed action plan has been drawn to implement this elevation.

#### 2. Maritime & Defence Cooperation:

- Indian naval ships participated in maritime exercises in the Philippines for the first time.
- Finalisation of Terms of Reference between armed forces (Army, Navy, Air Force).
- Indian Coast Guard – Philippine Coast Guard cooperation enhanced.
- Focus on capacity building, training exchange, joint maritime activities.

#### 3. South China Sea & Indo-Pacific:

- India reaffirmed support for freedom of navigation and rules-based order.
- Highlighted the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982 as the legal basis.
- India's emphasis on the South China Sea as global commons directly supports ASEAN centrality.

#### 4. Economic Cooperation:

- Start of negotiations for a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA).
- India to support a pilot Sovereign Data Cloud project in the Philippines.
- Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty and Treaty on Transfer of Sentenced Persons signed.

#### 5. Connectivity & People-to-People Ties:

## India-Philippines relations elevated to level of strategic partnership, says PM Modi

**Kallol Bhattacharjee**  
NEW DELHI

India and the Philippines have decided to boost their defence and maritime links, begin direct flights, and start negotiating a new trade deal as they upgrade their ties to the level of a "strategic partnership", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday.

Welcoming visiting Filipino President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr., Mr. Modi said that as both countries support "freedom of navigation", cooperation in the maritime domain is "natural and essential." The two sides also announced the commencement of talks for a preferential trade agreement.

"We have been consistently working together in areas such as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, and search and rescue operations. Today, as the President is visiting India, three Indian naval ships are, for the very first time, participating in a naval exercise in the Philippines. India's hydrography ship is also a part of this important engagement," the Prime Minister said. He also expressed his "sincere gratitude" to the government of the Philippines for condemning the terror attack in Pahalgam on April 22.

The Prime Minister discussed regional and global issues with the Filipino President, and hinted at India's position on the disputes in the South China Sea.

"We remain committed to peace, security, prosperity, and a rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region. We support freedom of na-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Filipino President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr. in New Delhi on Tuesday. SHIV KUMAR PUSHAKAR

vigation in accordance with international law," he said.

Mr. Modi described the Philippines as an "important partner" in India's Act East Policy. "I am happy to share that we have decided to upgrade our ties to a strategic partnership. We have also prepared a detailed action plan to turn this partnership's potential into outcomes," he said. The Prime Minister also announced that direct flights between India and the Philippines will begin this year, while India will extend a free e-tourist visa facility to Filipino nationals for a period of one year, starting August 2025.

#### Defence cooperation

The two countries agreed on a number of defence-related mechanisms including the finalisation of the Terms of Reference between their armies, navies and air forces.

These agreements will cover "capacity building, joint maritime activities, exchange of training programmes between our officials, and all standard elements when we talk about defence cooperation", according to P. Kumaran, Secretary (East) of the Minis-

try of External Affairs. The two countries also agreed on the Terms of Reference for enhanced maritime cooperation between the Indian Coast Guard and the Philippine Coast Guard.

Mr. Kumaran also reiterated India's position on the South China Sea. "We consider the South China Sea as a part of the global commons. We support freedom of navigation and overflight in the region, and legitimate commerce through the waters of the South China Sea. India has an abiding interest in peace and stability in the region and our position is based on the UN Convention of the Law of the Seas, 1982," he said.

India and the Philippines sealed a treaty on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters and another treaty on the transfer of sentenced persons.

India announced that it will extend its support to a pilot project to set up the infrastructure needed for the Philippines Sovereign Data Cloud. India also invited the Philippines to participate in its Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region.

## Daily News Analysis

- Direct flights between India and the Philippines to begin in 2025.
- Free e-tourist visas for Filipino citizens starting August 2025.

### India and its Neighborhood & Strategic Interests:

- Deepening ties with ASEAN nations aligns with India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific Vision.
- Countering China's assertiveness in the South China Sea by strengthening relations with affected ASEAN states like the Philippines.

### Critical Analysis:

#### Significance:

- Enhances India's profile as a security provider in the Indo-Pacific.
- Adds strategic depth to bilateral defence engagements.
- Opens economic avenues through potential PTA and digital infrastructure projects.

#### Challenges:

- China's response to India's deeper defence ties in the region may be adverse.
- Implementation of trade deals and defence cooperation requires sustained political and bureaucratic will.

### UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques:** India's Act East Policy is increasingly strategic in nature. Discuss with reference to India-Philippines relations.

India's foreign policy and energy security strategy face a new geopolitical challenge as the United States, under Donald Trump's potential presidency, threatens penalty tariffs, and the European Union imposes sanctions over India's continued import of Russian oil. This episode marks a pivotal moment where New Delhi may shift its traditional alignment and explore assertive diplomatic and economic alternatives to safeguard national interests.

## India may change stance amid Trump's threat of more U.S. tariffs, European Union sanctions over Russian oil

### NEWS ANALYSIS

**Suhasini Haidar**  
NEW DELHI

The statement by the Ministry of External Affairs on Monday, defending India's purchases of Russian oil, is its most explicit since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, making it clear that India will take "all necessary measures" to safeguard its interests.

The MEA's response followed the new threats by U.S. President Donald Trump to impose penalty tariffs over and above the massive 25% reciprocal tariffs the U.S. will impose on Indian goods as tariffs kick in worldwide on Thursday. It also followed EU sanctions imposed in July against Rosneft's partially-owned Vadrinar refinery and other Indian companies engaged in reprocessing Russian oil.

On Monday, Mr. Trump said India was selling "massive amounts" of Russian oil for "big profits" without "caring how many people in Ukraine are being killed by the Russian war machine", which was why he would raise tariffs "sub-



**Weighing options:** India could continue to buy crude from Russia or seek alternative partners. FILE PHOTO

stantially". The MEA statement called out both the U.S. and the European Union for their double standard, given they themselves continued to purchase Russian energy, critical minerals, fertilizers, iron and steel.

India shifted its oil purchases to Russia after 2022, when Ural imports made up less than a per cent of its oil imports, increasing to as much as 40% by 2023. However, the MEA statement said that India's purchases are "compelled" by the global market and the need for affordable energy costs. It added that in comparison the U.S. and EU imports from Russia were not even a "vital national compulsion", calling the targeting of India "unjustified

and unreasonable".

The statement left other double standard unsaid, such as the U.S. and Europe's funding and arming Israel's war in Gaza, that has led to the killing of at least 60,000 Palestinians, including 18,000 children. Nor did it point out that the U.S. has not announced penalties on China, a bigger buyer of Russian oil. Meanwhile, Mr. Trump himself, just a few months ago was much less critical of the Russian war, and had even threatened Ukrainian President Volodymyr directly for not engaging with Russia. "Like any major economy, India will take all necessary measures to safeguard its national interests and economic security," said the MEA.

This marks a shift from the past when New Delhi's response to low-impact U.S. and EU sanctions of Indian companies for Russian transactions was submissive. In 2017, the Modi government agreed to "zero out" all its oil imports from Iran and Venezuela, even though they were cheaper and of higher quality, after threats from the previous Trump administration. In 2022, India refused to submit to threats from the Biden administration, possibly as it did not believe it would carry out those threats, as Mr. Trump is quite clearly capable of doing.

### Changing tack

The MEA's statement could indicate that it is prepared to change to a third tack – that of considering "measures" against any further costs imposed by the West, even though Indian oil companies have begun reducing their Russian intake. These measures, according to experts could be three-fold: maintaining *status quo*, looking for alternative partners, and retaliatory actions.

The first option would be to continue to buy Rus-

sian energy at competitive prices and even double down on them, while weathering sanctions imposed by the U.S. and the EU, and continuing to pursue free trade agreements with both in the hope these would lessen such penalties. This is the strategy that the government has employed thus far.

The next option, to search for alternative options for trading to circumvent U.S.-EU sanctions, could include moving to quickly conclude FTA negotiations ongoing with the GCC, EAEU, Australia, New Zealand, and so on. It could also conclude talks on revising the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement or even a re-look at joining the 15-nation ASEAN-led Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership that India withdrew from in 2019, largely due to concerns about China. While this was not a possibility even a few weeks ago, when Commerce and Industries Minister Piyush Goyal referred to ASEAN as the "B-team of China", and the AITIGA as a "mistake", the government's outlook may change given Mr. Trump's

relentless tirades.

The third option, of countermeasures, could involve suspending talks with the EU on the BTIA, and with the U.S. on trade, nuclear energy, defence purchases and others until they prove more reasonable on the issue.

India could also consider restarting Iran and Venezuela oil supplies, which could prove cost-effective, but could also incur further sanctions. Experts also point out that the Russian penalties are only one of a barrage of actions by Washington that may lead New Delhi to reconsider its ties with the U.S. in other spheres as well – with divergences emerging on trade and investment, repercussions on technology transfer, counter-terrorism strategy (given Mr. Trump's moves with Pakistan and counter-narrative on Operation Sindoor), and multilateralism with Mr. Trump's threats against BRICS. All eyes are now on whether the turbulence will impact the strongest pillar of India-U.S. ties – their shared Indo-Pacific strategy and the Quad summit that India is due to host this year.

### Background and Context

Since the Russia-Ukraine war began in 2022, India has substantially increased its crude oil imports from Russia due to affordability. By 2023, Russia became India's largest oil supplier, replacing traditional partners



like Iraq and Saudi Arabia. However, these imports have drawn criticism and retaliatory actions from the West, including:

- EU sanctions on Indian entities linked to Russian oil reprocessing.
- Donald Trump's warning of steep tariffs on Indian goods, accusing India of profiteering from the war.

In response, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) issued a strong statement defending its sovereign energy choices, signaling a departure from earlier submissive postures to U.S. pressures.

### India's Strategic Dilemma

India now stands at a crucial juncture with three possible strategic responses:

#### 1. Maintain the Status Quo

- Continue Russian energy imports at discounted rates.
- Proceed with ongoing FTA negotiations with the U.S. and EU, hoping trade diplomacy can soften sanctions.
- Example: India's earlier approach post-2022 balanced non-alignment with strategic silence.

**Challenges:** May face increasing financial and technological sanctions and reduced space for negotiation.

#### 2. Seek Alternative Partners

- Accelerate trade and energy partnerships with GCC, EAEU, Australia, and ASEAN.
- Reconsider joining RCEP, despite earlier withdrawal due to concerns over China.
- Explore new bilateral and regional energy deals with Iran and Venezuela, who offer cheaper crude.

Implication: This path could diversify energy sources and reduce over-dependence on any bloc, but comes with diplomatic balancing challenges.

#### 3. Retaliatory Countermeasures

- Suspend negotiations on India-EU BTIA and pause high-level trade talks with the U.S.
- Rethink participation in strategic dialogues like the Quad or delay defence procurements from the U.S.
- Reinstate oil imports from Iran and Venezuela, even at the risk of secondary sanctions.

**Significance:** Demonstrates sovereign assertiveness but could erode trust in strategic alliances.



## Geopolitical Undercurrents and Double Standards

- India has also highlighted Western hypocrisy — while the EU and U.S. criticize Indian imports, they themselves continue buying Russian gas, minerals, and metals. Moreover, the U.S. has not sanctioned China, a major importer of Russian crude, indicating selective targeting of India.
- Also notable is the silence on U.S. backing of Israel's war in Gaza, which has caused immense civilian casualties, raising questions about moral consistency.

## Wider Implications for India's Foreign Policy

- **Energy Security:** India's imports are driven by price and volume requirements of a growing economy, not politics.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** India's refusal to yield to pressure reflects its growing confidence as a global power.
- **US-India Ties:** While robust, Trump's unpredictability may test defence, technology, and Indo-Pacific cooperation, including the Quad Summit.
- **Multilateralism:** India may recalibrate its role in platforms like BRICS if Western pressure intensifies.

## Conclusion

India's evolving stance signals a shift towards realpolitik — where national interest trumps normative alignment. As the global order reconfigures amid war, sanctions, and strategic rivalries, India's measured assertiveness in oil diplomacy could emerge as a template for middle powers balancing economic security and global expectations. The coming months will test India's ability to assert strategic autonomy without sacrificing crucial partnerships.

### UPSC Mains Practice Question

*Ques: India's oil diplomacy amid Western sanctions reflects a shift towards strategic autonomy. Critically examine India's evolving energy policy in the context of increasing geopolitical and economic pressure from the U.S. and EU. (150 Words)*

Money laundering, the process of converting illegally earned money into legitimate assets, poses a serious threat to India's financial integrity and internal security. As per the Finance Ministry's recent report to the Rajya Sabha, **5,892 cases** have been registered under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)** since 2015, but only **15 convictions** have been secured. This wide gap reflects serious challenges in enforcement and judicial processes related to financial crimes in India.

# How should money laundering be tackled?

What did the Finance Minister report with respect to the number of cases under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act? What are the three stages through which money is laundered? How will the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement help to stop illegal transfer of money?

## EXPLAINER

**C. B. P. Srivastava**

### The story so far:

A report submitted by the Finance Minister in the Rajya Sabha states that 5,892 cases were taken up by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) 2002, since 2015. Of these cases, only 15 convictions have yet been ordered by special courts. The government claims that investigations have been initiated in more or less all cases, and that Enforcement Case Information Reports (ECIRs) have been issued to initiate proceedings. However, these figures raise two important aspects. First, that the number of convictions vis-a-vis total cases is far from satisfactory and secondly, that money laundering cases have been rising signalling that the government has not been able to check such financial crimes.

### What is a laundromat?

The term is said to have originated from the use of laundromats by organised crime syndicates in the U.S. as cover for their crimes and under-the-table dealings. A laundromat is an all-purpose financial vehicle. It may be set up by a bank or any other company engaged in providing financial services. However, it can also help clients launder the proceeds of crime, hide ownership of assets, embezzle funds from companies, evade taxes or currency restrictions and move money offshore.

### How is money laundered?

Money laundering, as defined under Section 3 of PMLA, is an act through which processes or activities connected to the proceeds of crime are concealed, possessed, acquired, or used and projected as untainted property or claiming to be untainted property.

In the first stage called placement, the launderer introduces money into the



ISTOCKPHOTO

financial system which might be done by breaking up large amounts of cash into smaller sums (a process called smurfing). In the second stage, that is layering, money is shifted to other locations through investments and transactions. And finally in the integration stage, the laundered money is brought into the financial system through real estate, business or asset formation etc. The Supreme Court in *P. Chidambaram versus Enforcement Directorate* (2019) held that hiding the illegal source of money affects the financial system and also the sovereignty and integrity of the nation. Other impacts of money laundering include expansion of money supply which might prove detrimental to monetary stability of the country

ultimately impacting inflation. Moreover, it may also affect trading, according to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

### When about the PMLA?

In line with the UN Political Declaration and Global Programme of Action (adopted by the UN General Assembly in February 1990), the law has been made to prevent money laundering and to confiscate the property involved or obtained. The most significant part of the statute is that the burden of proof is on the accused. Another feature is that the ECIR is sufficient to initiate proceedings which has also been reiterated by the Supreme Court in *Vir Bhadra Singh versus ED* (2017) – that no FIR is required to initiate proceedings under the Act. The

only requirement as per the top court was that a scheduled offence (offence against the state) be essential for the offence of money laundering. However, despite being such a stringent law, the offence has become rampant.

### What are the issues to be addressed?

The number of money laundering cases is seriously increasing, questioning the efficacy of the implementation of the law. Moreover, on many occasions, the law has been abused by authority which has been seen and referred to by the Supreme Court as well. In *Vijay Madanlal Chaudhury versus Union of India* (2022) the Court held that to initiate prosecution under Section 3 of the PMLA, registration as scheduled offence is a pre requisite but for initiating attachment of property under Section 5, there need not be a pre-registered criminal case. This view has been very often misused by authorities with politically motivated intentions.

It is important that the authorities follow the recommendations of the FATF and ensure that money laundering cases are handled with care and caution so that misuse could be checked, and genuine cases reported and investigated properly to enhance the rate of conviction. Money laundering is a serious offence as it has a direct linkage with terror activities and is a major source of terror financing. Instead of political motives, the law should be used to address the issues and concerns involved in a genuine manner. Though India has signed the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with about 85 countries, which helps to check money laundering, things are not yet in the right direction and much needs to be done. These agreements promote the exchange of financial and tax-related information between tax authorities of participating countries. This facilitates the enforcement of tax regulations and helps prevent illegal activities like tax evasion and money laundering.

C. B. P. Srivastava is President of the Centre for Applied Research in Governance.

## THE GIST

Money laundering, as defined under Section 3 of PMLA, is an act through which processes or activities connected to the proceeds of crime are concealed, possessed, acquired, or used and projected as untainted property or claiming to be untainted property.

The number of money laundering cases is seriously increasing, questioning the efficacy of the implementation of the law.

Though India has signed the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA) with about 85 countries, which helps to check money laundering, things are not yet in the right direction and much needs to be done.

## Understanding the Process and Challenges

### *Stages of Money Laundering*

**As per the PMLA, the process involves three stages:**

1. **Placement** – Introduction of illicit funds into the financial system.
2. **Layering** – Transferring the funds through various accounts and transactions to disguise the origin.
3. **Integration** – Reintroduction of the laundered money into the economy as legitimate assets (e.g., through real estate or business).

### *Issues in Tackling Money Laundering*

- **Low conviction rate:** Despite thousands of investigations, conviction rates remain abysmally low.
- **Misuse of the law:** Courts have flagged instances of the PMLA being misused for **politically motivated actions**, especially in the **absence of a scheduled offence**.
- **Procedural opacity:** Unlike the FIR in normal criminal law, **ECIRs under PMLA are not made public**, raising questions of transparency and due process.
- **Overreach of Enforcement Directorate (ED):** The ED has vast powers of arrest and property attachment, sometimes exercised without sufficient judicial scrutiny.

## Existing Measures and Global Coordination

### *Legal & Institutional Framework*

- **PMLA, 2002:** India's primary anti-money laundering law.
- **Enforcement Directorate:** Investigates money laundering and foreign exchange violations.
- **Supreme Court Judgments:**
  - *P. Chidambaram v. ED (2019)*: Upheld serious economic impact of laundering.
  - *Vijay Madanlal Choudhary v. Union of India (2022)*: Clarified that property can be attached without a criminal case.

### *International Collaboration*

- **FATF Recommendations:** India is committed to the **Financial Action Task Force** guidelines on anti-money laundering and terror financing.
- **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs):** Signed with over 85 countries, DTAAs aid in the **exchange of financial and tax-related data**, helping curb tax evasion and illicit fund transfers.
- **Information Fusion Centre–Indian Ocean Region:** Enhances maritime security and tracking of suspicious transactions via regional cooperation.

## Way Forward

**To effectively tackle money laundering in India, the following steps are essential:**

1. **Ensure transparency and due process** in ED investigations; ECIRs should follow principles of natural justice.
2. **Improve conviction rates** through better case preparation, training of financial investigators, and strengthening the prosecution process.
3. **Avoid political misuse** by ensuring that ED's functioning remains independent and subject to parliamentary oversight.
4. **Use technology and data sharing** through DTAA's, FATCA, and other international tax cooperation mechanisms.
5. **Implement FATF recommendations** rigorously, particularly on beneficial ownership, cross-border data exchange, and monitoring non-financial sectors.

## Conclusion

Money laundering is not merely a financial crime—it undermines national security by facilitating terror financing, corruption, and tax evasion. While India has created a robust legal and institutional structure, gaps in implementation, misuse of enforcement mechanisms, and a weak conviction rate weaken its effectiveness. Tackling money laundering requires a balanced approach—one that strengthens enforcement but also ensures **accountability, transparency, and judicial oversight** to uphold the **rule of law** and protect democratic institutions.

### UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques:** Discuss the role of judiciary in interpreting the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. How has judicial intervention shaped its implementation?



In modern democracies, where human rights and dignity are ostensibly foundational, the stark inequality in whose lives are protected and whose deaths are normalized reveals a deeper, troubling undercurrent — **necropolitics**. Coined by Cameroonian philosopher **Achille Mbembe**, necropolitics refers to the **use of political power to decide who may live and who must die**. It critiques how **states, institutions, and systems** expose marginalised populations to **death, violence, or abandonment** not as accidents, but as deliberate outcomes of policy and power structures.

## Necropolitics: who is allowed to live and who may die

Necropolitics is a theory that examines how modern nation states determine whose lives are disposable and may be sacrificed in the name of security, threat, or political control

Rebecca Rose Varghese

**H**ave you ever noticed how an airstrike in Mumbai triggers national outrage, but a similar attack in Kashmir rarely breaks through the noise? We're so accustomed to hearing about violence there that it barely feels like news. It's as if deaths in these regions are already anticipated and normalised. These aren't just accidents of geography. They are symptoms of a deeper system, a politics that decides whose lives are worth grieving and whose deaths are simply part of the landscape.

Necropolitics is the use of political power to determine who is allowed to live and who can be made to die. It describes how states and institutions manage death by exposing certain populations, such as refugees, the poor, or racialised communities, to violence, abandonment, or structural neglect.

Coined by Cameroonian historian Achille Mbembe in a 2003 essay and later expanded in his book *Necropolitics* (2019), the concept builds on Michel Foucault's notion of biopolitics but shifts the focus. While biopolitics is concerned with managing life and populations, necropolitics interrogates the power to let people die, deciding who is disposable, who may be sacrificed, and whose suffering is structurally ignored.

**Biopolitics versus necropolitics**  
Foucault traces how the organisation of power changed over time: from sovereign power, where rulers exercised authority through public spectacles of death, to disciplinary power, which works through institutions like schools and prisons to train individuals using surveillance and routine. This evolved into biopower – the control of entire populations through the optimisation of life via vaccination, sanitation, census-taking, and reproductive governance. Biopower appears progressive, but as Foucault warned, it carries within it the power to "make live and let die."

Mbembe takes this further. He asks: if biopolitics is truly about preserving life, why are so many still dying? Why are certain lives treated as expendable? Biopolitics tells only half the story. The other half is necropolitics, the deliberate exposure of certain populations to death, not by accident but by design. While biopolitics governs life, necropolitics governs death. It does not merely ignore suffering; it produces it with calculated precision. Necropolitics is not about letting people die, but about making them die.

Unlike sovereign power, necropolitics does not rely on the will of a single ruler. It operates through policies, institutions, and global indifference that erases the value of some lives. These lives are stripped of dignity, reduced to statistics, and rendered disposable. This logic, Mbembe argues, has deep colonial roots. Consider the Bengal famine of 1943. Millions died not due to a lack of food, but because British colonial policies prioritised imperial interests over Indian lives. Death was systemic, not accidental. People were treated as tools for the empire, valued only in relation to others' survival.

In necropolitical systems, people are



**Sanctioned death:** A man who was shot while seeking food aid at an Israeli and U.S.-backed distribution point, is carried on a motorcycle in the central Gaza Strip on July 27. AP

not killed through spectacle but through slow, structural abandonment. Death is normalised and bodies become data. The people, whether in borders, refugee camps, or detention centres, are managed, contained, and forgotten. For instance, during the HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980s and '90s, queer people, especially Black, brown, trans, and working-class individuals, were abandoned by healthcare systems and denied dignity. As scholars like Judith Butler and Jasbir Puar note, only queer lives made respectable through whiteness or middle-class identity were grieved.

Puar calls this queer necropolitics, where some queer lives are protected while others are left to die.

### Characteristics of necropolitics

Necropolitics operates through several defining features that together create a system where certain lives are systematically devalued. First, state terror

suppresses dissent through surveillance, violence, imprisonment, or elimination, even within democracies. Second, states collaborate with private militias or criminal groups, blurring the line between state and non-state violence. Third, enmity becomes a governing principle, making the right to kill a measure of authority. Fourth, war and terror become self-sustaining economies, fuelling global surveillance and arms markets. Fifth, active predation of certain social groups displaces entire communities, as seen in resource extraction projects. Sixth, death is administered in varied forms like torture, drone strikes, starvation, and disappearance. Finally, these acts are morally justified through ideologies like nationalism, religion, or utilitarianism.

### Creating a state of exception

Necropolitics is sustained not only through violence but through the

systematic invention of enemies. Modern states are driven by the desire for an enemy onto whom fear and blame can be projected. This enemy need not be real – the fantasy alone justifies surveillance, exclusion, and elimination. In neoliberal regimes, the threat turns inward, prompting expanded policing and emergency laws that target not just the accused but also those who resemble them.

Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls this condition the state of exception, when the law suspends itself in the name of preserving itself. Mbembe expands this to show how, for many populations, the exception is not temporary but permanent.

In such spaces, legality becomes hollow and rights are applied selectively. What governs is not justice but logistics, such as who gets care, who receives compensation, who can cross a border, and who is punished for trying. These decisions may seem administrative, but they are deeply necropolitical, revealing how life and death are unequally distributed.

### The living dead

Mbembe also introduces a haunting concept within necropolitical thought – the living dead: people who are not killed outright but are forced to live in conditions so degraded, unstable, and violent that life becomes a slow, continuous dying. These are individuals and communities who may remain biologically alive but are stripped of political, social, and moral recognition.

We saw this during India's COVID-19 lockdown, when migrant workers were left to walk for days without food, shelter, or transport. Many collapsed and died on highways or railway tracks, not from the virus, but from state neglect. Their deaths were quietly processed and bureaucratically explained and largely unmoored.

Mbembe calls these zones death worlds – spaces where populations are exposed to abandonment or sudden violence. Drawing from Agamben's "state of exception," Mbembe shows how these spaces operate outside the usual rule of law. Here, death is not a breakdown of governance but its very method.

Gaza is one of the starkest examples. After the Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, Israeli strikes flattened hospitals, aid centres, and homes. Even the deaths of children were dismissed as collateral damage. The silence that followed reveals necropolitics at its clearest: some deaths are not just permitted but framed as necessary for political strategy and national security.

### In everyday life

Necropolitics does not always come with bombs or guns. More often, it takes the form of law, policy, and bureaucracy – sterilisation drives targeting Dalit and Adivasi women, police databases that profile Muslim names or Black people, drone strikes that label civilians as "targets," or detention centres where children sleep on cold floors. These are not failures of a protective system, but features of one designed to discard.

It also exists in silence – in the world, including states and global institutions – looking away as thousands of civilians, including women and children, are killed in places like Gaza, while the rest of us carry on with our daily lives. Necropolitics is not confined to war zones. It thrives in the slow violence of poverty, caste, racism, and displacement. So, if power today functions through abandonment and death, what does resistance look like? The goal must not simply be to survive, but to live lives that are recognised, valued, and grieved.

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### *Understanding the Concept*

- **From Biopolitics to Necropolitics:** Michel Foucault's **biopolitics** focused on the regulation of populations through healthcare, sanitation, and demography — a management of life. Mbembe expands this to **necropolitics**, where the state not only manages life but actively produces death — both fast (war, violence) and slow (structural neglect).
- **Death as Governance:** In necropolitics, **death is not a failure of the system, but its method** — evident in war zones like **Gaza**, caste-based neglect in **India**, and abandonment of vulnerable groups during **COVID-19** lockdowns.

### *Examples in Contemporary Context*

1. **India's Migrant Workers during COVID-19:** The 2020 lockdown exposed the structural apathy toward migrant workers, many of whom **died walking back home**, victims not of the virus but of state neglect — a textbook case of necropolitics.
2. **Conflict Zones like Kashmir or Gaza:** The **disproportionate normalization of violence**, lack of consistent outrage, and selective mourning reflect how certain geographies are treated as **death worlds**, where lives are dispensable.
3. **Sterilisation of Dalit/Adivasi women** and **surveillance of Muslims** through digital profiling are institutional practices that **disempower and devalue communities**, showcasing necropolitics through bureaucracy.
4. **Global Silence on Civilian Deaths:** The international community's muted response to humanitarian crises — from **Yemen to Gaza** — reveals how **geopolitical interests** overshadow the **value of human life**.

### *Ethical and Constitutional Dimensions*

- **Article 21** of the Indian Constitution guarantees the **Right to Life**, yet necropolitical governance violates it through **unequal access to resources, justice, and recognition**.
- **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)** emphasise **social and economic justice**, but necropolitics thrives when **poverty, caste, religion, and race** are used to selectively enforce laws or deny care.
- From an **ethical standpoint**, necropolitics contradicts the **Kantian principle of treating individuals as ends, not means**, and disregards **compassion, equity, and dignity**, key tenets of ethical governance.

### Conclusion

Necropolitics challenges the very fabric of democracy, revealing how governance can become a tool of abandonment rather than inclusion. Recognising this invisible violence is the first step towards resistance. **True governance must ensure that no life is disposable**, and that **dignity, care, and justice** are not privileges for the few but rights for all. In a world increasingly divided by **who matters and who doesn't**, the call is not just to survive, but to **live lives that are visible, valued, and mourned when lost**.

### UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques:** How do caste, class, and communal identities influence the creation of 'death worlds' in India? Explain with reference to the concept of necropolitics. **(150 words)**





# The technocratic calculus of India's welfare state

**W**ith a billion Aadhaar enrollments, 1,206 schemes integrated into the Direct Benefit Transfer system, and 36 grievance portals across States/Union Territories, India's welfare orientation is transitioning into a technocratic calculus. The promise to deliver social welfare at scale, bypassing leaky pipelines and eliminating ghost beneficiaries, might have led to a 're-casting' that delivers 'efficiency' and 'coverage' at the cost of 'democratic norms' and 'political accountability'.

## An offloading

Are we witnessing the emergence of a post-rights based welfare regime? Is the Indian digital welfare state headed towards a systemic impasse? What is the technocratic calculus behind all this? Recent game-theoretic work shows that technocratic rule thrives where parties are polarised. Evidently, our questions have changed. We have shifted from "who deserves support and why?" to "how do we minimise leakage and maximise coverage?" Our politicians across party lines have rationally offloaded hard-choices onto data-driven algorithms without questioning the complexities of constitutional values.

Contextualising Habermas's 'technocratic consciousness' and Foucault's 'governmentality', India's welfare architecture is increasingly shaped by measurable, auditable, and depoliticised rationality. Schemes such as E-SHRAM and PM KISAN embody a uni-directional, innovation-led logic that is streamlined, measurable, and intolerant of ambiguity or error. Conversely, we have deliberative calls for participatory planning and local feedback embodying the long forgotten core of democratic thinking resonating Giorgio Agamben's notion of homo sacer – a life stripped of political agency.

Seemingly, welfare, in the contemporary context, has ceased to exist as a site of democratic deliberations. On a microscopic level, a rights-bearing citizen has been replaced by the auditable beneficiary. Thus, it calls for an urgent need for the state to revisit (in a Rancierean sense) whether it is curating who is visible, who



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The promise to deliver social welfare at scale, using data-driven algorithms, may be at the cost of 'democratic norms' and 'political accountability'

can complain, and whose suffering is computable. Despite claims of a 'socialistic state', we observe a decade-low decline in India's social sector spending that has dwindled to 17% in 2024-25 from the 2014-24 average of 21%. Further, there are some interesting observations beyond plain statistics. Key social sector schemes have borne the brunt of such decline where minorities, labour, employment, nutrition and social security welfare saw a significant decline from 11% (in the pre-COVID-19 phase) to 3% (in post-COVID-19 phase).

Parallely, social commentators often comment the Right to Information (RTI) regime to be in 'existential crisis' and further uncovering the cloak on RTI exposes a critical issue within the institution of dysfunctional information commissions. As of June 30, 2024, the number of pending cases crossed the four lakh tally across 29 Information Commission's (ICs), and eight CIC posts were vacant (annual report of CIC, 2023-24).

The Indian welfare regime must recover its capacity for reflexivity and situated knowledge, elements that are very peculiar to gram sabhas and frontline bureaucratic discretions. To draw Rancière's critique on democracy, we highlight one major impending concern, that "democracy depends on whose suffering is rendered visible and contestable, not merely computable". This concern is further highlighted in Justice D.Y. Chandrachud's Aadhaar dissent (2018), that warned precisely against such decontextualisation of identity which served as a caution against reducing citizens to disembodied, machinic data who are devoid of care, context, or even constitutional assurance in some cases.

## Another instance of algorithmic insulation

Another worrisome trend is the Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System's flattening of the federal hierarchies into ticket-tracking systems. Although it is a novel initiative resolving tickets and routing complaints across state agencies, empirical data show that

lakhs of grievances were disposed of between 2022-24. But on a closer examination it might just be centralising the visibility but not the responsibility – a form of algorithmic insulation that renders political accountability increasingly elusive.

These observations are not to dismiss the value of such initiatives. Rather, they invite a deeper conversation on how welfare governance can evolve for a more resilient and responsive state. The government should now think along the lines of 'democratic antifragility' so that our systems built on perfect data and flawless infrastructure do not fail catastrophically under stress (consider Taleb's 'hyper-integrated systems').

We need to empower States to design context-sensitive regimes where federalism and welfare push for pluralism as a feature. Institutionalising community-driven impact audits (as reiterated by the UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty), by looping in the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan and Gram Panchayat Development Plans should be the core target. All States must be made capable to build platform cooperatives where self-help groups act as intermediaries; functionally, lessons can be learnt from Kerala's Kudumbashree. Civil society must be incentivised to invest in grass-roots political education and legal aid clinics in order to strengthen the community accountability mechanisms. Lastly, it is time we strengthen and codify our offline fall-back mechanisms, human feedback safeguards, and statutory bias audits by embedding the "right to explanation and appeal" – as proposed by the UN Human Rights for digital governance systems.

## Focus on the citizen

We, as citizens of India, must realise that a welfare state stripped of democratic deliberations is a machine that works efficiently for everyone except those it is meant to help. For a Viksit Bharat we will have to reorient digitisation with democratic and anti-fragile principles so that citizens become partners in governance, and not mere entries in a ledger.

## GS. Paper 02 Governance

**UPSC Mains Practice Question:** India's welfare regime is increasingly driven by technocratic logic, often at the cost of democratic deliberation. Critically examine this statement with reference to the evolving digital governance architecture in India. (250 words)



## Context :

India's welfare architecture has undergone a significant transformation in the past decade. With over **1,200 schemes integrated into the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** system and nearly **a billion Aadhaar enrollments**, the state is increasingly relying on **technology-driven governance** to deliver welfare efficiently. However, this **technocratic turn**, while ensuring coverage and leak-proof systems, raises concerns over **democratic accountability, political agency, and rights-based inclusion**.

### Core Analysis:

#### 1. *Technocratic Calculus vs Democratic Deliberation:*

- Welfare schemes like **PM-KISAN** and **E-SHRAM** are guided by a logic of **measurable outcomes, auditability, and algorithmic control**, rather than **community participation or rights-based entitlement**.
- The focus has shifted from **"who deserves welfare"** to **"how to eliminate inefficiencies"** — indicating a retreat from deliberative democratic processes.

#### 2. *Algorithmic Governance and Exclusion:*

- Citizens are increasingly treated as **data points**, not rights-bearing individuals — echoing **Habermas's technocratic consciousness** and **Foucault's governmentality**.
- Justice D.Y. Chandrachud's dissent in the **Aadhaar verdict (2018)** warned against such **dehumanisation**, cautioning against identity systems that reduce individuals to machinic records devoid of context or care.

#### 3. *Shrinking Social Sector Spending:*

- Social sector expenditure has declined to **17% in 2024-25**, compared to a **21% average in the previous decade**, affecting vulnerable sectors like minorities, labour, and nutrition.
- This reflects a **disconnect between state priorities and ground-level needs**, contradicting the state's professed commitment to a **socialistic ethos (Article 38, DPSP)**.

#### 4. *Crisis in Grievance Redressal and RTI Regime:*

- The **Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)**, though efficient, centralises data without ensuring **local accountability**.
- With over **4 lakh RTI cases pending** and **vacancies in Information Commissions**, transparency — a key pillar of democratic welfare — is weakening.

#### 5. Need for Reflexivity and Participatory Governance:

- Welfare must move beyond **centralised, one-size-fits-all** models. Lessons can be drawn from **Kerala's Kudumbashree**, where **self-help groups act as intermediaries** in welfare delivery.
- Institutions like **Gram Sabhas, GPDPs**, and **community-based audits** must be empowered to restore **bottom-up accountability**.

#### Way Forward:

- Embed the "Right to Explanation"** in digital welfare systems to ensure **human oversight** and **due process**.
- Incentivise civil society** to promote **grassroots political education and legal literacy**.
- Build '**offline fallback mechanisms**' for digital exclusion and statutory **bias audits** of welfare algorithms.
- Ensure **federal pluralism** in welfare policy design — one that is **context-sensitive** and **regionally adaptive**.

#### Conclusion:

As India advances towards becoming a **Viksit Bharat**, the need is not just for efficient systems but for **just systems**. A welfare state, in its true spirit, must protect the **agency, dignity, and voice of its citizens**, not reduce them to invisible cogs in a technocratic machine. The real measure of a welfare regime lies not just in **coverage statistics**, but in whether it serves **those who need it the most — with care, transparency, and accountability**.