

## The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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A special tribunal in Bangladesh has sentenced former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan to death for *crimes against humanity* related to the violent crackdown on the 2024 student uprising. This development marks one of the most dramatic political shifts in Bangladesh's recent history and carries major implications for **regional politics, democratic governance, human rights, and India–Bangladesh relations**—making it highly relevant for UPSC preparation.

## Sheikh Hasina, associate sentenced to death over 2024 crackdown on youth

**Rabiul Alam**  
DHAKA

A special tribunal in Bangladesh sentenced former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and former Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan to death on Monday, finding them guilty of crimes against humanity during the state crackdown on a student uprising in July-August 2024.

Former Inspector-General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, who turned a state witness and testified before the tribunal against Ms. Hasina and Mr. Khan, was sentenced to five years in prison after he admitted to his involvement in the crackdown of the protests that led to the fall of the Hasina government. Reacting to the development, Ms. Hasina said the charges were unjustified, arguing she and Mr. Khan "acted in good faith and were trying to minimise the loss of life".

### 'Misreading facts'

"We lost control of the situation, but to characterise what happened as a pre-meditated assault on citizens is simply to misread the facts," the former Prime Minister said in a statement. "I mourn all of the deaths that occurred in July and August of last year, on both sides of the political divide. But neither I nor other political leaders ordered the killing of protesters," she added.

The verdict by the International Crimes Tribunal-1 represents the most dramatic legal action against the Awami League leader and comes just months before the parliamentary



Protesters outside the residence of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, former Bangladesh President and the father of Sheikh Hasina, in Dhaka. AP

election scheduled for February. The tribunal also asked the government to provide compensation to the families of the victims and to those injured during the crackdown.

Attorney-General Md Asaduzzaman said Ms. Hasina, who is now in exile in India, and Mr. Khan, who is also in exile, cannot appeal the ruling as long as they remain fugitives. He further said the court had ordered the attachment and confiscation of all properties belonging to Ms. Hasina and Mr. Khan within Bangladesh, and that the state would take all necessary legal measures to implement the verdict.

Leaders and activists from various political and social organisations gathered outside the tribunal as the verdict was being read out. A group of students at Dhaka University were seen chanting slogans demanding execution of Ms. Hasina. Awami League activists took out processions across the country against the verdict. Several of them were arrested.

Shortly after the verdict, Home Affairs Adviser Lt. Gen. (Retd) Jahangir Alam

alleged that attempts are being made "from a neighbouring country" to destabilise Bangladesh's security and law-and-order situation.

### 'Extradite convicts'

"We urge the Government of India to immediately extradite the two convicts to the Bangladeshi authorities," Dhaka's Foreign Ministry said in a statement, adding that it was "an obligatory responsibility for India". Bangladesh warned that "granting asylum to these convicts... would be extremely unfriendly and an affront to justice."

The Awami League denounced the ruling. "We reject this illegal and politically motivated verdict of the 'Kangaroo Court' against Bangabandhu's daughter, the leader of the people and the President of the Awami League. We hope that the people of Bangladesh will reject this verdict. We will establish the rule of law in the country by releasing [Muhammad] Yunus very soon," Awami League organising secretary Shafiqul Alam Chowdhury Nadel told *The Hindu*.

### Current Affairs Context

## Daily News Analysis

### • The 2024 Student Uprising

- Large-scale student protests erupted in July–August 2024 over unemployment, corruption, and alleged authoritarianism.
- The government responded with force, resulting in several deaths and massive unrest.
- This crackdown was considered a major factor leading to the fall of the Hasina government.

### • Tribunal Verdict

- International Crimes Tribunal-1 sentenced:
  - **Sheikh Hasina**
  - **Asaduzzaman Khan** to death.
- Former IGP Abdullah Al-Mamun turned state witness, admitted involvement, and received a 5-year sentence.

### • Reactions

- Hasina called the charges “unjustified,” claiming the government acted in “good faith” to minimise casualties.
- Students in Dhaka University demanded her execution.
- The Awami League denounced the verdict as “illegal” and “politically motivated.”

### • India Angle

- Both convicts are currently in **exile in India**.
- Bangladesh demanded their **immediate extradition**, calling it India’s “obligatory responsibility.”
- Dhaka warned that asylum to Hasina would be an “unfriendly act.”

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### India–Bangladesh Relations

- Extradition treaty implications
- Asylum norms and non-refoulement
- Impact on border security
- Regional political stability
- Influence of China in Bangladesh’s domestic politics

### A. Causes Behind Bangladesh's Crisis

1. Concentration of power under Hasina
2. Alleged manipulation of elections
3. Restrictions on opposition and civil liberties
4. Youth unemployment and economic stress
5. Erosion of institutional checks and balances
6. Public mistrust of political leadership

## B. Issues with the Tribunal Verdict

### Concerns

- Verdict announced months before elections → possible political motives
- Opposition termed the tribunal a "Kangaroo Court"
- Trial held while Hasina and Khan were in exile → questions on fair process
- Potential weaponization of judiciary

### Arguments Supporting the Verdict

- Accountability for unlawful state violence
- Justice for victims and protesters
- Transparent testimony from police officials
- Establishes deterrence against excessive state force

## C. Implications for India

### 1. Diplomatic Dilemma

- India must balance:
  - Legal obligations
  - Regional stability
  - Strategic interests
  - Humanitarian considerations
- Extraditing Hasina may affect long-term bilateral trust.

### 2. Security Implications

- Risk of refugee movement into West Bengal and Assam
- Rise of extremist or anti-India elements in unstable conditions
- Border tensions and cross-border crime
- Impact on counterterror cooperation

### 3. Geopolitical Concerns

- China may leverage political instability to increase influence
- Impact on BIMSTEC, BBIN cooperation
- Maritime security implications in the Bay of Bengal

## D. Impact on Bangladesh's Internal Politics

- Public polarisation between Awami League and opposition
- Resurgence of student political activism
- Possibility of military involvement in stabilising the situation
- Heightened uncertainty before the upcoming elections

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### (1) 'Crimes Against Humanity' is defined under

→ **Rome Statute of the ICC**

### (2) India–Bangladesh Extradition Treaty

→ Exists; political offences are often exempt.

### (3) Non-refoulement Principle

→ Customary international law (India is not legally bound but often follows selectively)

### (4) International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh

→ Domestic court; not part of ICC.

## Conclusion

The sentencing of Sheikh Hasina is more than a judicial verdict—it signals a deep political transformation in Bangladesh, with significant implications for regional stability. For India, this situation requires **careful diplomacy**, balancing humanitarian principles, treaty obligations, and strategic interests. The episode highlights broader themes of **state accountability, democratic resilience, youth political mobilisation, and the fragility of civil liberties**—key areas of focus for UPSC aspirants.

## UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques:** Consider the following statements regarding the International Crimes Tribunal of Bangladesh (ICT-BD):

1. It is a part of the International Criminal Court (ICC) system under the Rome Statute.
2. It is empowered to try individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.
3. Its jurisdiction extends only within the territory of Bangladesh.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Ans:** (b)

## UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques:** "Political instability in India's neighbourhood directly affects India's security and foreign policy choices." Discuss in the context of recent developments in Bangladesh. (150 Words)



**Page 02 : GS 3 : Environment & Ecology / Prelims**

The Supreme Court of India has delivered a significant judgment directing States to consider notifying **human-wildlife conflict (HWC)** as a *natural disaster*. This enables victims to receive structured compensation under disaster relief norms. The Court also issued strict directions to protect core and buffer areas of tiger reserves and ordered restoration of the damaged Corbett Tiger Reserve, making Uttarakhand fully accountable.

This ruling strengthens India's wildlife governance framework and aligns with conservation and livelihood protection, making it highly relevant for UPSC.

## States must actively consider notifying any 'human-wildlife conflict' as natural disaster: SC

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday, in a judgment, said States must actively consider notifying 'human-wildlife conflict' as a natural disaster.

A Bench headed by Chief Justice of India B.R. Gavai directed States to pay out an ex-gratia amount of ₹10 lakh to victims of human-wildlife conflicts under the Centrally Sponsored Umbrella Scheme of Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-IDWH).

"All States should have smooth and inclusive compensation policies for crop damage, loss of life of both human and cattle. In order to reduce the timelines to mitigate the issues resulting out of human-wildlife conflict, close coordination between different agencies



The Supreme Court directed States to notify buffer and core areas of their tiger reserves within the next six months. FILE PHOTO

and departments with mandated responsibilities should be ensured," the Supreme Court ordered.

### **Tree felling in Corbett**

The court was hearing a petition alleging illegal tree-felling and construction in the Corbett tiger reserve, one of the oldest in the country.

The judgment made the State of Uttarakhand fully liable to restore and repair the Corbett ecology. The

State, in consultation with the Central Empowered Committee, was directed to submit a restoration plan for the reserve in two months, begin demolishing illegal constructions there in three months and file a compliance affidavit in the apex court in a year.

The judgment, authored by Chief Justice Gavai, directed States to notify buffer and core areas of their tiger reserves within the next six months.

### (Current Affairs)

## 1. Human–Wildlife Conflict as Natural Disaster

- States must **actively consider** classifying HWC as a natural disaster.
- This makes victims eligible for compensation through **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF)** and other mechanisms.

## 2. Compensation Directions

- SC mandated **₹10 lakh ex-gratia** to victims of HWC under the **Centrally Sponsored Umbrella Scheme of Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS–IDWH)**.
- All States must create **smooth, inclusive, uniform compensation policies** for:
  - Human death
  - Cattle loss
  - Crop damage

## 3. Urgent Coordination

- SC emphasized close coordination among Forest, Revenue, Disaster Management, Police, and Panchayati Raj departments to mitigate conflicts swiftly.

## 4. Corbett Tiger Reserve Case

- Illegal tree cutting and construction reported in Corbett.
- SC held **Uttarakhand liable** to:
  - Submit a restoration plan in **2 months**
  - Start demolishing illegal structures within **3 months**
  - File compliance report within **1 year**

## 5. Buffer and Core Area Notification

- All States must notify **core and buffer zones** of tiger reserves within **6 months** (as per Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 requirements).

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## Static Context

### What is Human–Wildlife Conflict?

Interaction between humans and wildlife that results in:



- Loss of life
- Injury
- Livelihood impacts
- Crop and property damage

Occurs due to:

- Shrinking habitats
- Encroachments
- Fragmentation of forests
- Increasing animal populations in some regions
- Climate change forcing animal movement

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## Natural Disaster Classification

Under the **Disaster Management Act, 2005**, a “disaster” includes natural and man-made events causing loss of life or property.

If HWC is notified as a natural disaster:

- Compensation becomes **automatic and uniform**
- Quick release of funds through **SDRF/NDRF**
- Streamlined administrative response

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## CSS-IDWH Scheme

- A Centrally Sponsored Scheme of MoEFCC
- Supports:
  - Tiger reserves
  - Elephant reserves
  - Wildlife habitats

- Human–wildlife conflict mitigation

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### Core and Buffer Areas in Tiger Reserves

Defined under the **Wildlife Protection Act (WLPA), 1972** (amended 2006):

- **Core Area:** Critical Tiger Habitat — no human activity
- **Buffer Area:** Sustainable use area — eco-development, coexistence
- States must notify these formally; many are pending.

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### Analytical Insights

#### A. Why Treat HWC as a Natural Disaster?

1. Ensures uniform compensation across States
2. Reduces delays in financial relief
3. Makes mitigation a structured government responsibility
4. Supports vulnerable communities living in forest fringes
5. Encourages States to invest in:
  - Solar fencing
  - Early warning systems
  - Rapid response teams

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#### B. Issues Exposed in Corbett Tiger Reserve

- Misuse of political power leading to illegal construction
- Administrative negligence
- Violation of WLPA norms
- Ecological damage in a highly sensitive tiger habitat

#### SC's directions reinforce:

- Accountability
- Transparency
- Legal compliance

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## C. Long-term Implications

- Better conflict mitigation strategies
- Strengthening of protected area management
- Reduction of livelihood stress for rural communities
- Improved human-wildlife coexistence

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## Conclusion

The Supreme Court's judgment marks a crucial step toward integrating **wildlife conservation with human welfare**. By urging States to classify human–wildlife conflict as a natural disaster, the Court pushes for a systematic, humane, and responsive compensation mechanism. The strict action on Corbett Tiger Reserve underscores the judiciary's role in safeguarding ecological integrity.

This balanced approach—protecting both wildlife and people—strengthens India's environmental governance and aligns with the constitutional mandate of Article 48A and global conservation commitments.

## UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques :** Consider the following statements regarding Human–Wildlife Conflict (HWC):

1. Human–Wildlife Conflict is recognized under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 as a notified natural disaster.
2. Compensation for HWC-related deaths can be provided under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme for Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-IDWH).
3. Only the Central Government can declare an event as a “state-specific disaster”.

**Which of the statements above is/are correct?**

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

**Ans: (b)**

## UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques :** “Human–wildlife conflict is no longer just a conservation issue but a governance challenge.” Discuss in the light of the Supreme Court’s recent directions to States. (250 words)

Quality education

**Page : 07 : GS 3 : Science & technology / Prelims**

Neurotechnology — which interfaces with the human brain to read, record, or influence neural activity — is rapidly advancing due to AI, brain-computer interfaces (BCIs), and investments like Neuralink and the U.S. BRAIN Initiative. With such power comes ethical risk, including manipulation of thoughts, misuse of brain data, and erosion of mental privacy. In this context, UNESCO has issued the **world's first global normative ethical framework** (November 2024) to regulate neurotechnology, protect mental integrity, and guide responsible innovation.

## What are UNESCO's new guidelines for the use of neurotechnology?

Neurotechnology refers to devices and procedures that access, assess, and act on neural systems, including the brain; if the brain were a radio station, neurotechnology is the set of devices to help tune in; it merges advances in neuroscience, engineering, and computing to improve brain function

Neethu Rajam

**U**NESCO issued the first global normative framework on the ethics of neurotechnology on November 5; this came into force on November 12. This recommended standard is designed to maintain a balance between innovation and human rights to protect the human brain and brain-related data from misuse.

Such misuse includes exploiting brain signals to follow persuasive messages, using brain data for political marketing, for deciding premiums in insurance, or even requiring applicants or employees to submit brain data tests to screen for suitability, stress tolerance, and hidden traits in an employment setting.

The emerging field of neurotechnology has made it possible to profile people in this way — and the UNESCO framework provides guidance for anyone studying, researching, and developing applications of this technology to prevent such harms.

### Defining neurotechnology

Neurotechnology refers to devices and procedures that access, assess, and act on neural systems, including the human brain. If the brain were a radio station, neurotechnology is the set of devices to help to tune in.

With advances in research and investments in projects like the U.S. BRAIN Initiative and Elon Musk's Neuralink, there is significant interest today in brain-computer interfaces, particularly those driven by artificial intelligence (AI). For example, AI-assisted neuroimaging can allow doctors to precisely detect tumours and identify the possibility of stroke in people.

Broadly, neurotechnology merges advances in neuroscience, engineering, and advanced computing to evolve solutions that improve brain function and enhance human capabilities — and it has made rapid strides. According to a UNESCO study published in 2023, public investments in neurotechnology already exceeded \$6 billion. Private investment had already grown to \$7.3 billion by the end of 2020.

While this growth has been linked to the prospect of human enhancement and promising benefits in medicine, such as alleviation of mental illnesses, overcoming physical disabilities, and improving palliative care, it also evokes numerous concerns.

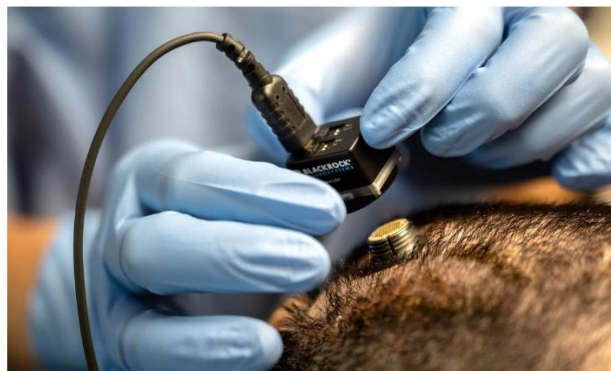
### Neurotech challenges

Neurotechnology allows neurodata — a.k.a. neural or brain data — to be decoded, giving rise to concerns about user privacy, protection against misuse, and informed consent among users.

To address them, the scientific community and political bodies alike have for some time now been seeking "neurorights" and ethical standards that help innovators prioritise the moral, psychological, and emotional protection of the brain.

Some "neurorights" have been formulated to encompass mental privacy, integrity, and liberty. And while they are yet to be codified, there is a general consensus that such rights are important when it comes to users interacting with neurotechnology.

Many jurisdictions have begun recognising some neurorights as well. Chile is the first country to protect "mental integrity" in its Constitution. The



A neurosurgeon at UCSF Medical School, prepares to connect an experimental brain implant that will help a paralysed person speak by reading his brain signals. PUBLIC DOMAIN

state of California signed a law in 2024 that protected people's brain data from being potentially misused by neurotechnology companies.

However, these initiatives focused on individual rights; until the late 2010s there were still significant gaps in the standards for R&D in neurotechnology research. In 2019, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) developed the first international standards on "Responsible Innovation in Neurotechnology Enterprises"; which focused on the "responsible development" and the "responsible use" of novel technologies via responsible technology transfer.

It also drew attention to the use of intellectual property rights, including in the form of patents to protect neurotechnological invention and the development of patent pools (which allow multiple companies and/or inventors to come together to offer one shared licence so others can use the technology without negotiating many separate deals). This eases technology transfer as well as the sector's development.

The OECD guidelines also called for free licensing to allow economically developing countries to customise technologies to their needs and evolve strategic partnerships.

Three years later, in 2022, the UNESCO International Bioethics Committee published a report on the ethical issues of neurotechnology; among other things, it called for a comprehensive framework in governing neurotechnology innovations.

### UNESCO's framework

UNESCO's new recommendations are the result of extensive consultations since 2021. The recommendations' framework focuses on human dignity, human rights, gender equality, social and global justice, and sustainable development — and recognises the vast potential of neurotechnology innovation for medical and assistive applications.

The recommendations are based on a three-pronged strategy: (i) defining the

**Neurotechnology allows neurodata — a.k.a. neural or brain data — to be decoded, giving rise to concerns about user privacy, protection against misuse, and informed consent among users**

nature and scope of neurotechnology and neurodata; (ii) identifying the values, principles and offering directions to nations to incorporate the recommendations with a focus on particular sectors (health and education, among others); (iii) and considerations for vulnerable populations such as children and older adults.

In this light, the recommendations say the following principles ought to govern neurotechnology innovation: beneficence, proportionality, no harm, autonomy and freedom of thought, protection of all types of neural data from misuse, non-discrimination, inclusivity, accountability, trustworthiness and transparency, epistemic justice, and protection of future generations.

In advancing these principles, the recommendations explicitly prohibit any use of neural or non-neural data for manipulative or deceptive purposes, including in political, medical and commercial contexts. They also heighten attention towards the principles of autonomy, free will, and informed consent in any valid uses of neurotechnology.

### Implications for innovation

As noted in its preamble, the new framework aims to facilitate responsible research and innovation (RRI) approach in neurotechnology, both in the public and the private sectors. This involves formalising a strategy to achieve ethical and sustainable outcomes by systematically weighing the benefits along with the risks involved.

An RRI approach requires researchers to think ahead about the effects of a

technology they are developing on people and the planet; involving the public and other stakeholders to join in the conversation; and to shape their research to match society's values and needs.

While acknowledging the importance of this, the framework also calls attention to the role of intellectual property rights in incentivising neurotechnology innovation even as it invokes the risks associated with the commodification of the human body.

To this end, the recommendations call for an open science model so that research outcomes are freely available to everyone. Open science models work like a public library: the data, software, technology, and methods are to be shared openly so that anyone can verify, reuse, and/or build on it.

However this approach is inimical to intellectual property rights, which prize private control and licensing. Thus, a plan to implement open science in neurotechnology development will also require strong follow-through, more so since innovation incentives have for a long time now spurred neurotechnology research.

Innovation experts like Sebastian Pfitzenhauer also have noted that while effective governance for neurotechnology must focus on the private sector, they must be encouraged to self-regulate using companies' ethics policies, ethics boards and ethics-by-design approaches to R&D.

Taken together, the recommendations framework contributes to a long-standing need for an ethical framework to govern neurotechnology innovation. However, fostering RRI within neurotechnology is less about choosing a single model and more about creating an ecosystem of innovation pluralism where different models coexist, informed by commitments to ethical principles and standards, such as the one now presented by UNESCO.

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## Key News Points



UNESCO's framework came into effect on November 12, 2024

It is the first global standard governing the ethics of neurotechnology

Aim: balance innovation with human rights protection

Prohibits misuse of neural data in political, commercial, medical contexts

Emphasizes informed consent, autonomy, freedom of thought

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## What Exactly Is Neurotechnology?

Devices/procedures that:

- **Access** the brain
- **Assess** neural activity
- **Act upon** neural systems

Examples:

- Brain-computer interfaces (BCI)
- Neural implants
- EEG-based cognitive assessment
- AI-based neuroimaging
- Neural prosthetics

Public investment: **\$6 billion**

Private investment: **\$7.3 billion (2020)**

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## Why Does Neurotechnology Need Regulation?

**Brain data can reveal:**

- Preferences
- Emotions
- Stress levels
- Cognitive states

**Misuse risks include:**

- Political manipulation
- Commercial targeting
- Workplace profiling
- Insurance discrimination
- Loss of mental privacy → "Neurorights" threatened

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## Unesco's New Guidelines — Key Features

### A. Three-pronged strategy

1. Define neurotechnology + neurodata
2. Identify values & principles for states
3. Special safeguards for vulnerable groups (children, elderly, disabled)

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### B. Ethical Principles (major focus for UPSC Mains)

UNESCO says neurotechnology must follow:

- Human dignity & freedom of thought
- Beneficence & non-maleficence
- Autonomy and informed consent
- Protection of neural data
- Transparency & accountability
- Inclusivity & non-discrimination
- Epistemic justice (fair access to knowledge)
- Protection of future generations

## C. Explicit Prohibitions

UNESCO bans:

- Manipulating neural data for **political persuasion**
- Using brain signals for **insurance premium decisions**
- **Employment screening** based on brain tests
- Commercial **exploitation of mental states**
- Any deceptive use of neural or non-neural data

## D. Responsible Research & Innovation (RRI) Approach

Researchers must:

1. Anticipate societal impacts
2. Involve public & stakeholders
3. Align innovation with societal values
4. Follow "ethics-by-design"

## E. Position on Intellectual Property & Open Science

UNESCO calls for:

- **Open science** → shared data, open methods
- But warns about **commodification of the human body**
- Calls for balance between **innovation incentives & public good**

## Conclusion

UNESCO's new neurotechnology guidelines mark a historic step in global governance of emerging technologies. As neurotech grows in medicine, education, and human enhancement, safeguarding mental privacy, autonomy, and neural integrity becomes critical.

The framework seeks to ensure that innovation does not come at the cost of fundamental human rights and that a balanced, ethical, and inclusive global neurotechnology ecosystem can emerge.

## UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques :** With reference to neurotechnology, consider the following statements:

1. It includes technologies that can read and influence neural activity in the human brain.
2. UNESCO has issued the first global ethical framework for neurotechnology.
3. Neurotechnology can be used in political persuasion and employment profiling under UNESCO guidelines.

**Which of the above statements is/are correct?**

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

**Ans:** (a)

## UPSC Mains Practice Question

**Ques :** “Neurotechnology presents unprecedented opportunities in healthcare but raises profound ethical challenges. Discuss the significance of UNESCO’s new global guidelines in this context.” (250 words)

## In News : GS 2 : Polity & Governance

India's anti-rape legal framework has evolved through decades of public outrage, judicial introspection, and legislative reform. Chief Justice of India B. R. Gavai's recent criticism of the Supreme Court's 1979 **Tukaram v. State of Maharashtra (Mathura rape case)** judgment marks an important moment of institutional reflection. The judgment — which acquitted two policemen in a custodial rape case on the flawed assumption that absence of external injuries implies consent — triggered one of India's strongest women's rights movements. The incident catalysed major criminal law amendments, leading to stronger definitions of consent, recognition of custodial rape, and broader protections for women. The trajectory from 1979 to the 2023 **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)** represents India's continuing effort to ensure dignity, autonomy, and justice for sexual assault survivors.

## The trajectory of anti-rape laws in India

By condemning the 1979 Supreme Court acquittal in a custodial rape case, Chief Justice of India B. R. Gavai has highlighted India's evolving legal reforms aimed at better protecting sexual assault survivors and redefining consent



**A better dawn:** Bhanwari Devi, activist and sexual assault survivor, addresses a gathering at Somnath grounds, Sion in 2018. FILE PHOTO

## LETTER & SPIRIT

Krishnadas Rajagopal

**F**orty-six years after the Supreme Court acquitted two policemen in the custodial rape of a teenage tribal girl in Maharashtra, concluding she consented to the sexual intercourse as there were no visible marks of physical injury on her, Chief Justice of India B. R. Gavai India called the judgment "a moment of institutional embarrassment". The judgment reflected a deeply regressive and patriarchal understanding of consent, effectively denying the social context of power, coercion, and vulnerability in which

The Chief Justice said the "troubling" judgment in *Tukaram versus State of Maharashtra* in 1979 became a turning point as the verdict brought the nation together in protest, for the legal system had failed to protect the dignity of the very person it was meant to safeguard. The acquittal ignited the women's rights

It also forced Parliament to address the lapses in criminal law; to strengthen legal protections against custodial rape; to make punishments under the Dowry Prohibition Act more stringent; and to introduce the Family Courts Act. A series of Criminal Law Amendments, from 1983 to the spirit of changes made in sexual offences' provisions in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) in 2023, trace their spirit to the top court's "institutional failure" in the *Mathura* rape (*Tukaram versus State of Maharashtra*) judgment.

**The trajectory of the case**  
The 1979 judgment, which further condemned a custodial rape survivor, was pronounced even before the "the ink had dried" in Justice Krishna Iyer's verdict in the *Nandini Satpathy* (1978) case. The court, speaking through Justice Iyer, condemned the practice of calling women

to police stations and declared that a woman must be questioned by the police only at her residence.

The incident in the Mathura rape case happened in March 1972. The rape survivor, an orphan aged between 14 and 16 years, was one among four who were called to the police station at night. After a brief questioning, she was asked to stay behind while the others were asked to return home. She was then taken to the station by two policemen, a head constable and a constable inside the police station. The trial court, in its judgment, found the rape survivor a "shocking liar" whose testimony "is riddled with falsehood and improbabilities". The court came to the conclusion that she had sexual intercourse while at the police station but not at the Mathura jail where it was claimed that she had been "abducted" in sexual intercourse.

The Bombay High Court, in 1976, overturned the Sessions Judge's findings and concluded the teenager was subject to forcible sexual intercourse amounting to rape. The High Court had held that the so-called 'consent' to act was only 'passive submission' by a helpless victim to persons in authority whose advances she could hardly repel by herself. In an appeal by the two policemen, the Supreme Court set aside the High Court judgment, agreeing with the petitioners that the 'alleged intercourse was a peaceful affair' as there were no marks of injury on her person.

**A letter which shook the nation**  
What brought the Mathura rape case into national consciousness and sparked outrage was a letter written by four intellectuals to the court in September 1979, shortly after the acquittal of the two accused policemen.

The September 1979 letter by Upendra Baxi, Vasudha Dhagamwar, Raghunath Kelkar and Lotika Sarkar pointed out to the judges the clear difference, both in law and common sense, between 'submission' and 'consent'. Consent involves submission; but the converse is

not necessarily true. Nor is absence of resistance necessarily indicative of consent, they argued.

The letter pointed out that there was not a single word in the judgment condemning the very act of calling a teenage girl and detaining her at the police station in gross violation of the law. Nor was there a single word in the judgment condemning the use of the police station as a theatre of rape or submission to sexual intercourse. "The Court gave no consideration whatsoever to the socio-economic status, the lack of knowledge of legal rights, the age of the victim, lack of access to legal services, and the fear complex which haunts the poor and the oppressed in police stations. May we respectfully suggest that you and your distinguished colleagues visit incognito, wearing the visage of poverty, some police stations in villages adjoining Delhi?" the letter had challenged the Supreme Court judges.

### Myriad amendments

The public furor following the 1979 judgment led Parliament to introduce the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1983 in which custodial rape was included as a separate offence under Section 376 of the erstwhile Indian Penal Code (IPC). The amendment shifted the burden of proof to the accused, from proving that the rape survivor to the accused if the fact of sexual intercourse was established. The top court framed the Vishaka guidelines against sexual harassment at the workplace when a public interest petition was filed after the gangrape of Bhanwati Devi, a Kashmir woman and an auxiliary nurse, by two police officers. The case was part of her job against child marriage, especially in poorer caste families.

The brutal gangrape and fatal assault of a 22-year-old physiotherapy intern in a moving bus by six men on a December 2012 night had the nation rise in protest again, demanding stricter laws to protect women and punish their attackers. The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013,

loosely crafted on the recommendations of the Justice J.S. Verma Committee, introduced, among others, provisions to punish police officers who do not record an FIR in sexual violence cases against women, or hospitals which do not provide free care to sexual assault victims. The 2013 amendments broadened the definition of rape as in Section 375 to include acts other than forcible sexual

Most importantly, it clarified that silence or a feeble no by a woman cannot be translated as a 'yes'. Besides, the amendments raised the age of consent from 16 to 18 years.

The amendments awarded death penalty to repeat offenders or if rape led to the death or 'persistent vegetative

The Unnao and Kathua rape cases of 2017 and 2018 compelled Parliament to usher in further amendments to make criminal laws for sexual offences against women more stringent. In the Unnao case, former BJP MLA Kuldeep Singh Sengar was convicted for the kidnap and rape of a minor girl.

The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 2018 provided death penalty as a punishment in rape cases in which the victims are below 12 years of age. The 2018 amendments also included a minimum of 20 years imprisonment if the victim is under 16 years of age. The amendments fast-tracked investigation as well as the trial and appeal proceedings in rape cases – two months to complete a probe and trial, and six months to wrap up appeals.

Finally, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2023 through the BNS, made sexual offences against women and children gender-neutral for both the victims and the perpetrators. It uniformly made gang rape of a woman aged below 18 years punishable with death or life imprisonment. The BNS also brought in new offences like sexual intercourse under false pretences and broadened the definition of sexual harassment.

## THE GIST

The Chief Justice said the "troubling" judgment in *Tukaram versus State of Maharashtra* in 1979 became a turning point as the verdict brought the nation together in protest, for the legal system had failed to protect the dignity of the very person it was meant to safeguard.

The September 1979 letter by Upendra Baxi, Vasudha Dhagamwar, Raghunath Kelkar and Lotika Sarkar pointed out to the judges the clear difference, both in law and common sense, between 'submission' and 'consent'.

The brutal gangrape and fatal assault of a 22-year-old physiotherapy intern in a moving bus by six men on a December 2012 night had the nation rise in protest, demanding stricter laws to protect women and punish their attackers.

## Key News Highlights

CJI Gavai termed the 1979 Mathura judgment an "institutional embarrassment"

The verdict ignored power imbalance, consent, and custodial coercion

Public outrage led to path-breaking amendments from 1983 to 2023

Laws evolved from protecting women from police abuse → to workplace harassment → to child protection → to gender-neutral frameworks

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## Static Context: Legal Concepts

### A. Consent in law (Section 375, IPC / now BNS)

- Consent must be **free, voluntary, unequivocal**
- Passive submission ≠ consent
- Silence or feeble "no" ≠ consent
- Consent obtained under authority, fear or coercion is invalid

### B. Custodial Rape (post-1983)

- Rape by police, public servants, jail authorities, hospital staff
- Burden of proof shifted to the accused

### C. Vishaka Guidelines (1997)

- Landmark framework for workplaces after **Bhanwari Devi** case
- Later codified as the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013

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## The Mathura Rape Case: A Turning Point

### Incident (1972)

- Survivor: 14–16-year-old Adivasi girl
- Raped inside police station
- Trial court: dismissed her testimony
- High Court: convicted policemen
- **Supreme Court (1979): acquitted**, citing no injury → assumed consent

### Why the judgment was flawed



- Ignored custodial coercion
- Ignored age, vulnerability, power imbalance
- Reinforced patriarchal notions of "habitual" sexual behaviour

## The historic letter (1979)

Written by Upendra Baxi, Lotika Sarkar, Vasudha Dhagamwar & Kelkar — highlighted:

- Difference between "consent" and "submission"
- Systemic oppression of poor women in police stations
- Asked SC judges to visit police stations "wearing the visage of poverty"

This letter ignited a national movement.

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## Trajectory Of Anti-Rape Law Reforms

### A. Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1983

Triggered directly by the Mathura case

- Introduced **custodial rape** as separate offence
- Shifted burden of proof
- Criminalised dowry-related offences more strongly
- Strengthened legal protection for women

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### B. Vishaka Guidelines (1997) – Workplace Sexual Harassment

- Based on PIL after **Bhanwari Devi** was gang-raped
- Introduced preventive, prohibitory, and redressal mechanisms
- Later became Workplace Sexual Harassment Act, 2013

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### C. Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2013 (post-Nirbhaya)

Based on the **Justice J.S. Verma Committee**

Key reforms:

- Expanded definition of rape beyond penetration
- Recognised non-consensual acts like insertion of objects/body parts
- Age of consent raised to **18 years**

- "No FIR refusal" by police made punishable
- Hospitals must provide free treatment
- Introduced stalking, voyeurism, acid attacks
- Clarified that *feeble no or silence is not consent*
- Enhanced punishments including death for extreme cases

## D. Criminal Law Amendment Act, 2018

(Post-Unnao & Kathua cases)

- Death penalty for rape of girls below **12 years**
- Minimum 20 years for rape of girls below **16 years**
- Fast investigation: 2 months for probe + 2 months for trial
- 6 months for appeal disposal

## E. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023

Latest reforms include:

- **Gender-neutral** sexual offences (victim + perpetrator)
- Gang rape of minor (<18 years): **death or life term**
- Added offences:
  - Sexual intercourse under false pretences
  - Expanded definition of sexual harassment
- Reorganized provisions but retained core protections

## Conclusion

The Mathura judgment, once a symbol of institutional failure, has become a powerful catalyst for reform. Over four decades, India's anti-rape laws have moved from narrow, patriarchal interpretations of consent toward a more survivor-centric, rights-based framework. While the legal trajectory—from the 1983 reforms to the 2013 Nirbhaya Act and the 2023 BNS—shows progress, persistent gaps in police accountability, societal attitudes, and implementation remain.

The journey reflects India's evolving understanding that justice for sexual assault survivors demands not just stronger laws, but deeper social change and institutional sensitivity.

## UPSC Mains Practice Question

## Daily News Analysis

**Ques: "The evolution of anti-rape laws in India reflects the deep interplay between judicial failures, public movements, and legislative reforms." Discuss in light of the trajectory from the Mathura case to the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. (250 Words)**

### In news : Prelims

Batukeshwar Dutt, often overshadowed by Bhagat Singh, remains a vital yet forgotten figure of India's revolutionary freedom struggle. His role in the 1929 *Central Assembly Bombing*, long imprisonment, repeated hunger strikes, and sacrifices highlight deep gaps in how India remembers its freedom fighters. The recent discussions marking his birth anniversary (18 November) revive questions on historical recognition, memory politics, and post-independence neglect of revolutionaries.



FULL CONTEXT



**Burning embers:** Statues of freedom fighters Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru at their memorial at Hussainiwalla border, Ferozepur, Punjab in 2022. R.V. MOORTHY

## Remembering Batukeshwar Dutt, the forgotten comrade of Bhagat Singh

Celebrated briefly for his role in the Delhi Assembly bombing, Batukeshwar Dutt, who was born on November 18, 1910, spent much of his life in obscurity, neglected by the nation he helped liberate. His story is one of courage, sacrifice, and erasure

Chaman Lal

**I**n April 8, 1929, the *Hindustan Times* in Delhi rushed out a special evening edition, while *The Statesman* in Calcutta cabled its story to London to evade colonial censorship. That afternoon, two young men had thrown harmless bombs into the Central Assembly Hall, now Parliament, raising slogans of *Inquilab Zindabad* (Long Live the Revolution) and *Samrajyavad ka Nash Ho* (Down with Imperialism). They scattered red pamphlets titled 'To Make the Deaf Hear'. Reporters caught the words, and newspapers across India and abroad carried dramatic headlines. One international paper proclaimed: "Reds Storm the Assembly!"

The two young men were Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt. Both were arrested, tried, and convicted. While Bhagat Singh went on to become one of the most iconic figures of the Indian freedom struggle, his comrade Dutt gradually faded from public memory, remembered only occasionally, and rarely honoured with the dignity he deserved.

**A revolutionary's journey**  
Batukeshwar Dutt was born on November 18, 1910, in the Burdwan district of Bengal. Convicted in the *Delhi Assembly Bomb Case* on June 12, 1929, he spent nine years in prisons across India – Multan, Jhelum, Trichinopoly, Salem, and even the Andamans. In each jail he resorted to hunger strikes, twice fasting for over a month, demanding humane treatment for political prisoners.

When Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev were executed in Lahore on March 23, 1931, Dutt was languishing in the Salem jail. That night he dreamt of Singh in chains, a vision that haunted him. Released in 1938, Dutt was

re-arrested during the Quit India movement of 1942 and spent another four years in jail.

After his release, he married Anjali, a school teacher, and settled in Patna with their daughter Bharti, who later became a Professor of Economics at Patna College. But life after independence offered little stability. The Bihar government allotted him a coal depot, but it proved financially unviable. President Rajendra Prasad intervened, urging the State to extend due consideration to him. The gesture resulted only in a token nomination to the Bihar Legislative Council – for the remainder of an existing member's six-month term.

Despite such neglect, Dutt remained respected by many political leaders. His health, however, declined in the mid-1960s. Afflicted with bone cancer, he was admitted to AIIMS, New Delhi, where he endured eight months of suffering. Leading orthopaedist Dr. Vig told his comrades that treatment could only ensure a "painless death". Plans to send him abroad were abandoned after the Indian High Commission in London reported that Delhi offered care equal to Europe's. Dutt passed away on July 20, 1965. Honouring his last wish, he was cremated at Hussainiwalla in Punjab, alongside Bhagat Singh, Rajguru, and Sukhdev. The site, which remained in Pakistan until 1965, had only recently come under Indian control for the construction of a memorial to the martyrs.

**Neglect and recognition**  
For a brief moment after his death, the nation honoured Dutt. His funeral procession was massive, attended by the President, Prime Minister, central ministers, the Lok Sabha Speaker, and the Punjab Chief Minister. The funeral drew vast numbers of people along the streets.

Yet today, few remember that the farewell accorded to him rivalled those of the most revered leaders of his time.

Ironically, the Parliament building where he and Bhagat Singh had staged their act of defiance still does not display their portraits. In contrast, the portrait of V. D. Savarkar, once an accused in Gandhi's assassination case (though later acquitted), hangs prominently opposite Gandhi's. In 2014, MPs including Dharamvir Gandhi and Sitaram Yechury protested this omission, but the demand to include Bhagat Singh – and by extension Dutt – was ignored.

The story of this neglect was first documented by Chaman Lal Azad, a fellow revolutionary who later became a journalist. While caring for Dutt at AIIMS, Chaman Lal Azad wrote a series of articles in the Urdu daily *Pratap*. These were later compiled as *Bhagat Singh aur Dutt ki Amar Kahani* (1966), one of the most authentic, if scattered, accounts of the revolutionary movement. The book contains Bhagat Singh's letters, court statements, and postcards – some published for the first time – along with Gandhi's letter to Dutt and rare photographs of him with Nehru and Indira Gandhi in 1963.

The book also records Dutt's conversations about fellow revolutionaries. In it, he spoke of Hari Kishan Talwar, who was hanged in 1931 for shooting Punjab's Lieutenant Governor, and of his comrade Ehsan Ilaahi, who migrated to Pakistan, became a musician, and died penniless despite Chaman Lal Azad's attempts to help him. Dutt also disapproved of films made on Bhagat Singh in the 1950s, which he and other comrades protested against. Only Manoj Kumar's *Shaheed* in 1965 won their approval, with the actor personally consulting Dutt.

Equally touching are accounts of his

bond with Bhagat Singh's family. Mata Vidyawati, Bhagat Singh's mother, spent long periods with Dutt in his final days. She even sold a Hindi epic poem on Bhagat Singh, gifted to her by poet Sri Krishan Saral, to raise funds for Dutt's treatment. Revolutionary comrades such as Shiv Verma, Sadashiv Mallapurkar, and Jatin Das's brother Kiran Das remained constantly by his side. Leaders including Home Minister Gulzari Lal Nanda, Defence Minister V. B. Chavan, Jagjivan Ram, Swaran Singh, and Dr. Sushila Nayyar also visited him in hospital, though such respect was rarely extended while he was alive and struggling.

**Ode to the forgotten soldier**

Chaman Lal Azad used his book to underline Bhagat Singh's intellectual legacy – his ability to rise above religion and envision socialism as the foundation of India's future. Dutt himself remarked that Singh was far-sighted, always with a book in hand, reading wherever he went.

Despite having a shared vision of India's future, history has not treated Dutt kindly. He remains absent from memorials, textbooks, and the national consciousness. While newer works such as Justice Anil Verma's *Bhagat Singh ke Sahyogi: Batukeshwar Dutt and Bhairav Lal Das's Vipri Batukeshwar Dutt* (both post-2007) have attempted to reclaim his place, Chaman Lal Azad's earlier book, rich with first-hand memories, is nearly lost. Its Hindi translation, commissioned years ago by the Government's Publications Division, still lies unpublished due to copyright hurdles.

Dutt's life illustrates how revolutionaries in India are often remembered only in passing.

Chaman Lal is a professor (retired) and a former chairperson of the Centre of Indian Languages at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

### Core Analysis

#### 1. Historical Importance of Batukeshwar Dutt

- Co-accused with **Bhagat Singh** in the Assembly Bombing of 1929.
- Accepted arrest intentionally to "make the deaf hear" and expose colonial repression.
- Spent **9 years in jail**, undertaking hunger strikes demanding the rights of political prisoners.
- Imprisoned again during **Quit India Movement (1942)**.

## 2. Post-Independence Neglect

- Received no stable livelihood despite being a national revolutionary.
- Bihar govt's "coal depot allotment" failed; only a *6-month nomination* to the Legislative Council was offered.
- Died of cancer in 1965 after prolonged suffering, though leaders visited him.

## 3. Erasure and selective memory

- Parliament has **no portraits** of Bhagat Singh or Dutt, though it displays others (e.g., Savarkar).
- Few memorials or school textbooks mention Dutt.
- Comrade Chaman Lal Azad documented his last days and the revolutionary network, but these works remain obscure.

## 4. Why this matters today

- Raises the issue of **nation-building narratives** that selectively glorify or ignore revolutionaries.
- Points to how **contemporary political discourse** appropriates some figures while sidelining others.
- Encourages debate on **inclusive history**, archival work, and institutional memory.

## Role of Revolutionaries in the Freedom Struggle

- HSRA (Hindustan Socialist Republican Association) radicalised the struggle after Non-Cooperation withdrawal.
- Bhagat Singh and colleagues promoted:
  - *Inquilab Zindabad*
  - Anti-imperialist socialism
  - Use of "propaganda by action"

## Why Dutt is important in static syllabus

- Represents the *non-mainstream, radical* wing of the movement.
- Symbol of:
  - Courage
  - Ideological commitment
  - Ethical protest (bombs were non-lethal)



## Current Context

- His **birth anniversary (18 November)** revived public discussion.
- Renewed debate on:
  - Why Parliament lacks their portraits.
  - How historical memory is shaped.
  - Demand to honour forgotten revolutionaries.
- Wider context: Rising public interest in re-evaluating freedom fighters' contributions.

## Conclusion

Batukeshwar Dutt's story is a reminder of India's incomplete historical memory. While Bhagat Singh remains a national icon, Dutt—his comrade, fellow revolutionary, and fellow sufferer—remains marginalised in public imagination. Honouring Dutt is not merely about correcting history but about recognising the ethical and ideological foundations of India's freedom struggle. India must integrate such forgotten heroes into mainstream narratives, ensuring their sacrifices find a dignified place in the nation's collective memory.

## UPSC Prelims Practice Question

**Ques: With reference to Batukeshwar Dutt, consider the following statements:**

1. He, along with Bhagat Singh, threw non-lethal bombs in the Central Assembly in 1929.
2. Batukeshwar Dutt was a member of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA).

3. After independence, he served a full term in the Bihar Legislative Council.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: (a)



## Daily News Analysis

# India needs to 'connect, build and revive' with Africa

Ten years ago, New Delhi hosted the last India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-III). The 2015 summit was a moment of significance. Marking a leap in India's diplomatic imagination under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India had welcomed representatives from all 54 African states.

Since then India has added 17 new missions across Africa. Trade has surpassed \$100 billion. Investment flows are gathering pace. India's support for Africa's global voice has grown. It was key in ensuring full membership for the African Union in the G-20. It is now time to take stock, not only of promises made but also of the foundations laid.

### The opportunities and challenges

By 2050, one in four people on earth will be in Africa. India will be the world's third largest economy. Between these two lies a potential growth corridor of commerce, demography, technology and aspiration.

India is among Africa's top five investors, with cumulative investments of \$75 billion. However, the underlying model has shifted. From ports to power lines, vaccine production to digital tools, the message for engagement is clear. Build together.

The evolution of ties is visible. In April 2025, India and nine African navies (Comoros, Djibouti, Kenya, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mozambique, the Seychelles, South Africa and Tanzania) exercised together in the first Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement (AIKEYME), initiating a security partnership rooted in shared oceanic geography.

India's Exim Bank recently extended a \$40 million commercial credit line to the ECOWAS Bank for Investment and Development (EBID) — modest in scale, but a signal of interest in



**Syed Akbaruddin**

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Ten years after India hosted the last India-Africa Forum Summit, the next chapter needs to be written

African-led development. Education remains a trusted pillar.

The new campus of IIT Madras, in Zanzibar, is the most visible example. Behind it stands decades of knowledge partnerships, including the Pan-African e-Network and India's Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme, which continue to train thousands across the continent.

These are not isolated efforts but part of a growing web. Beyond that, India continues to push for African representation in global institutions and contributes to United Nations peacekeeping missions on the continent.

India's trade with Africa is growing, but it still lags behind China. Indian firms arrive full of promise but are often slowed by small balance sheets and bureaucratic drag. The temptation to scale back is real, but erroneous.

Instead, India must move up the value chain. That means co-investing in future-facing sectors — green hydrogen, electric mobility and digital infrastructure. Africa today is asserting its terms. The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is laying the groundwork for a single continental market. India's UPI and digital stack can complement this transformation. Alas, tools alone are not strategy. Delivery is. In cities such as Kigali (Rwanda), Nairobi (Kenya) and Lagos (Nigeria), African innovation ecosystems are growing. But the competition is global.

### The human link

India's most enduring export to Africa is not technology. It is talent. Nearly 40,000 Africans have studied in India in the last decade, through the ITEC, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) and the e-Network platforms. Many have returned to shape policy, run

ministries or lead innovation back home. They are living bridges that carry trust across borders.

The movement is not one way. African students, athletes and entrepreneurs are carving their space in India. Nigerian footballers such as Ranti Martins have become household names. The Indian cricket team's fast bowling coach is South Africa's Morne Morkel. African voices are present in India's universities and laboratories. The partnership is not just strategic. It is lived.

### Looking to the future

If India wants to sustain this momentum, three moves matter.

First, connect finance to real outcomes. Every line of credit must lead to something visible and valuable. Public finance must de-risk, not displace, private capital.

Second, build an India-Africa digital corridor. This should rest not only on UPI and India Stack but also on Africa's digital strengths. Together, we can co-develop platforms for health, education and payments that serve the Global South.

Third, revive the institutional backbone. The IAFS has not met since 2015. That Summit, at Mr. Modi's insistence, brought all of Africa together. As its chief coordinator, this writer saw first-hand the diplomatic energy it released. It is time to bring that spirit back as a date on India's diplomatic calendar.

There was a time when merchants crossed the Indian Ocean in search of spice and gold. Today, India and Africa are not just exchanging goods. They are beginning to exchange confidence, capacity, ideas, and connecting futures.

A decade after India welcomed all of Africa to Delhi, the next chapter needs to be written. India once extended a hand to the whole of Africa. Now it is time to join hands and build together.

## GS. Paper 2 International Relations

**UPSC Mains Practice Question :** "India-Africa relations are transitioning from transactional engagement to co-development partnerships." Discuss in light of recent developments. (250 words)

## Context :

India-Africa relations stand at a critical inflection point. A decade after the landmark **India-Africa Forum Summit (IAFS-III) in 2015**, both regions have undergone demographic, economic, digital, and geopolitical shifts. As India aspires to play a leadership role in the Global South, Africa emerges as both a partner of opportunity and a test case for India's long-term foreign policy capacities. The article argues that India must now deepen cooperation through three pillars — **connect, build and revive** — to harness the full potential of the India-Africa partnership.

## Core Analysis

### 1. Progress since IAFS-III

## Daily News Analysis

- India hosted all **54 African nations** in 2015, marking a diplomatic milestone.
- Since then:
  - **17 new Indian missions** established in Africa.
  - India's **trade crosses \$100 billion**.
  - **\$75 billion cumulative investments**, making India among Africa's top 5 investors.
  - India helped secure **African Union's entry into G20** (2023).

This indicates a shift from symbolic diplomacy to **structured engagement**.

## 2. Emerging Opportunities

### a. Demographic and economic potential

- By **2050, 1 in 4 humans** will be African.
- India will be the **3rd largest economy**.  
Together they form a "growth corridor" based on **commerce, demography, tech, and aspiration**.

### b. Newer sectors of cooperation

- **Maritime Security:**  
First-ever **AIKEYME 2025** (Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement) with navies of 9 African nations indicates India's Indian Ocean strategy.
- **Finance & Development:**  
EXIM Bank's line of credit to **ECOWAS** shows interest in African-led development.
- **Digital and Education Collaboration:**
  - IIT Madras' **Zanzibar campus** (first IIT campus abroad).
  - Pan-African e-Network, ITEC skill programmes.
  - India Stack and UPI have major potential for African digital transformation.

### c. Talent and People-to-People Connect

- Over **40,000 Africans trained in India** in 10 years.
- Many now hold government/leadership roles in Africa.
- Africans increasing in Indian sports, academia, entrepreneurship.

This creates a **soft power bridge**, deeper than trade or defence.

## Key Challenges

## Daily News Analysis

- India still lags far behind **China** in trade and investment scale.
- Indian firms face:
  - Small balance sheets
  - Bureaucratic delays
  - Risk-aversion
- Africa's innovation ecosystems are attracting global competition (USA, China, EU).

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### The Way Forward

#### 1. Connect

- Link **finance to real projects**.
- Use Indian sovereign funds and credit lines to **de-risk** private investment.
- Improve execution, monitoring, and delivery.

#### 2. Build

- Develop **India–Africa digital corridor**.
  - UPI + India Stack + Africa's fintech innovation.
  - Joint platforms for health, education, payments.
- Co-invest in new sectors:
  - Green hydrogen
  - EV ecosystem
  - Clean energy
  - Digital public infrastructure

#### 3. Revive

- Bring back the **India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)** which has not met since 2015.
- Provide institutional continuity for political momentum.

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### Static Context

#### India–Africa historical ties

- Linked by **Indian Ocean trade**, anti-colonial solidarity, Gandhi's activism in South Africa.
- Indian diaspora across Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Mauritius has long cultural influence.

#### Mechanisms of cooperation



## Daily News Analysis

- **IAFS (2008, 2011, 2015)** — apex India–Africa platform.
- **Pan-African e-Network** — digital education & telemedicine.
- **ITEC** — capacity building.
- **Lines of Credit (LOCs)** via EXIM Bank.

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### Current Context

- A decade of the 2015 IAFS calls for reassessment.
- India's G20 presidency boosted Africa's diplomatic weight.
- Global geopolitics pushing India to take leadership among the **Global South**.
- Increasing Chinese presence in Africa compels India to refine its strategy.

### Conclusion

The India–Africa partnership has deep historical roots and vast future potential. But progress now requires **strategic clarity, institutional revival, and high-quality implementation**. As Africa becomes the demographic heart of the world and India becomes an economic powerhouse, their partnership must evolve from promises to performance. The next chapter will demand collaboration that is **future-oriented, digitally integrated, and mutually empowering**. For India, Africa is not merely a region—it is a partner in shaping the global South's future.