

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

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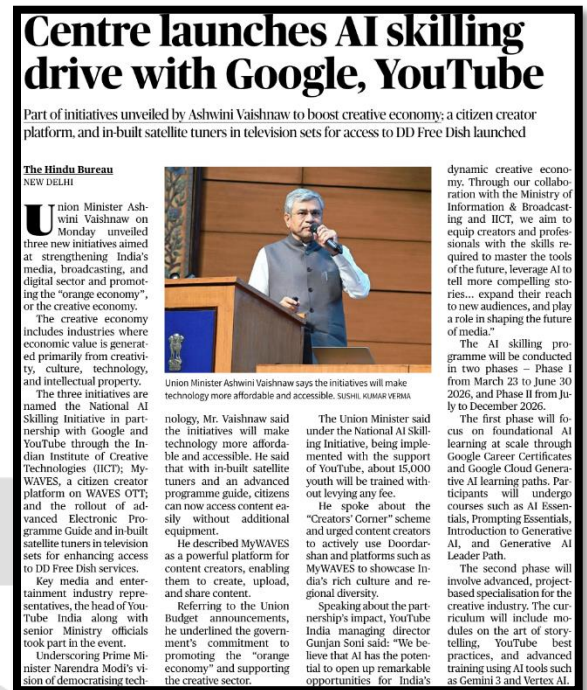
Important Day : 24 March : World TB Day

Page 06 : GS III : Indian Economy & Science and Tech / Prelims Exam

The Union Government has unveiled a tripartite initiative—skilling, platforming, and accessibility—to bolster India's Creative (Orange) Economy. By partnering with tech giants like Google and YouTube, the government seeks to bridge the gap between traditional storytelling and modern AI-driven content creation. This move aligns with the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047, where intellectual property and creativity are viewed as primary drivers of GDP.

Key Initiatives Launched

Initiative	Partner/Entity	Primary Objective
National AI Skilling Initiative	Google, YouTube, & IICT	To train 15,000 youth in two phases (Foundational & Advanced) on AI tools like Gemini 3.
MyWAVES Platform	WAVES OTT (Prasar Bharati)	A citizen-creator platform allowing users to create, upload, and monetize content.
Built-in Satellite Tuners	TV Manufacturers	Enables access to DD Free Dish without a Set-Top Box (STB), reducing costs for rural users.



Understanding the "Orange Economy" (Static Context)

The term Orange Economy, coined by the Inter-American Development Bank, refers to the ecosystem where value is generated from culture, creativity, and intellectual property.

Significance for India: India's creative sector currently supports nearly 50 million jobs (direct and indirect).

Export Potential: Creative services exports grew by 20% in 2023-24, earning over \$11 billion.

Soft Power: Global hits like *RRR* or the popularity of Indian digital creators enhance India's cultural diplomacy.

Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities

Democratization of Content: MyWAVES allows creators from Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities to bypass traditional gatekeepers.

Technological Leapfrogging: Integrating Gemini 3 and Vertex AI into the creative workflow can reduce production costs for Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, and Comics (AVGC).

Digital Inclusion: Built-in tuners and the Electronic Programme Guide (EPG) simplify access for the digitally semi-literate, ensuring "content for all."

Challenges

Algorithmic Risks: Dependence on global platforms (YouTube/Google) makes local creators vulnerable to opaque algorithm changes.

IP and Copyright: Indian law (Copyright Act, 1957) currently lacks clear frameworks for AI-generated content ownership.

Infrastructure Gap: High-end AI rendering still requires significant computing power (HPC) which is currently concentrated in urban hubs.

Conclusion

The launch of these initiatives represents a transition from a service-led economy to a creator-led economy. By equipping 15,000 creators with AI proficiency, India is preparing its workforce for the "Fourth Industrial Revolution" in media. However, for the Orange Economy to truly flourish, the government must complement these skilling drives with robust Intellectual Property (IP) protections and indigenous cloud infrastructure.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: With reference to the "Orange Economy", consider the following statements:

1. It refers to economic activities driven by culture, creativity, and intellectual property.
2. The term was coined by the World Bank.
3. It includes sectors like AVGC (Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming, Comics).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

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

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: "India is transitioning from a service-led economy to a creator-led economy." Discuss in the context of recent government initiatives to promote the Orange Economy. **(150 Words)**

The Union Government is set to introduce the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, to address existing legal gaps in the management of foreign-funded assets. While the 2010 Act and 2020 amendments focused on the receipt and utilization of funds, the 2026 Bill introduces a framework for the custodianship and disposal of assets (like land, buildings, or equipment) belonging to NGOs whose licenses have been cancelled, suspended, or not renewed.

Key Proposed Changes

Feature	Provision in 2026 Bill
Designated Authority	Appointment of an official to take over, manage, or dispose of assets created from foreign funds if a registration is lost.
Asset Disposal	Proceeds from the sale of such assets, along with unutilized funds, will be credited to the Consolidated Fund of India.
Definition of "Key Functionary"	Expanded to include Karta (HUF), partners, trustees, and anyone with management responsibility, making them personally liable for offenses.
Prior Approval for Probe	Law enforcement must seek Central Government approval before initiating an investigation into FCRA complaints.
Rationalized Penalties	Maximum imprisonment for offenses reduced from 5 years to 1 year, signaling a shift toward compliance-led regulation.
Fund Utilization	Fixed timelines for utilizing funds under the "prior permission" category to prevent open-ended holding of foreign money.

Centre to amend the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

The Union government is likely to amend the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act in the ongoing session of Parliament session. One of the key changes proposed is the appointment of a "designated authority" to take over, manage or dispose of assets created out of foreign funds by an NGO or association, which has had its FCRA registration suspended, cancelled, or not renewed.

Another proposed amendment is expanding the definition of "key functionary" of an NGO beyond an "office bearer/director" to include directors; partners; trustees; the *karta* (head) of a Hindu Undivided Family; office-bearers or members of the governing body or managing committee of a society, trust, trade union or association; and any other person who has control over or responsibility for the management or affairs of such an organisation.

The amendment also proposes to make key functionaries liable for offences under the FCRA.

Registration under the FCRA is mandatory for an NGO to receive foreign funds. Till now, the 2010 parent Act only had the

The Bill proposes to reduce the maximum imprisonment for FCRA offences from five years to one year

provision to regulate the flow of foreign funds, and not the statutory framework to manage the assets created out of such funds.

The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 also proposes to amend Section 43 of the parent Act, which will require any law enforcement agency or State government to seek prior approval of the Central government for initiation of investigation into FCRA-related complaints.

The Statement of Objects and Reasons of the Bill circulated by Home Minister Amit Shah said that, at present, around 16,000 associations are registered under the FCRA and they receive around ₹22,000 crore annually.

The Bill proposes to reduce the maximum imprisonment for FCRA offences from five years to one year. It also proposes fixed timelines for the utilisation of foreign funds received under the "prior permission" category, unlike the open-ended provision under the 2010 Act.

Evolution of FCRA

A. Historical Background

1976 (Emergency Era): Enacted to prevent foreign powers from influencing Indian optics/politics via independent organizations.

2010: Repealed the 1976 Act to "modernize" regulations. Introduced the 5-year renewal cycle.

2020: Introduced stringent curbs: prohibited sub-granting, capped administrative expenses at 20% (down from 50%), and mandated a designated SBI New Delhi account.

B. Constitutional & Legal Basis

Article 19(1)(c): While citizens have the right to form associations, the State can impose "reasonable restrictions" in the interest of sovereignty and public order.

Internal Security: The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) monitors FCRA to prevent Money Laundering and Terror Financing, aligning with FATF (Financial Action Task Force) recommendations.

Critical Analysis: Impact on Civil Society

Vesting of Assets: Critics argue that "provisional vesting" of assets in a government authority may cripple an NGO's ability to defend itself legally, as its infrastructure could be seized during a suspension period.

Centralization of Power: The requirement for Central approval before investigations may protect NGOs from local harassment but also centralizes control over which entities are scrutinized.

Accountability vs. Autonomy: Broadening the "key functionary" definition ensures individuals cannot hide behind corporate veils, but it may deter professionals from joining NGO boards due to the risk of personal liability.

Conclusion

The 2026 Amendment reflects a "custodial" turn in India's regulatory stance. By creating a statutory mechanism for asset management, the government aims to ensure that resources intended for social welfare are not diverted or left in limbo after an NGO's exit. However, the success of this law will depend on the transparency of the "Designated Authority" and ensuring that legitimate philanthropic work is not stifled by an environment of permanent asset insecurity.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: Which of the following statements best describes the purpose of the FCRA law?

- (a) To regulate domestic political funding
- (b) To prevent foreign influence on Indian civil society and polity
- (c) To promote foreign donations for NGOs
- (d) To regulate corporate CSR spending

Ans: (b)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Evaluate the role of FCRA in addressing concerns related to money laundering and terror financing. How does the 2026 Amendment strengthen or weaken this objective? **(150 Words)**



Page 07 : GS III : Environment / Prelims Exam

The Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) is a shorebird famous for its 30,000 km annual migration from the Arctic to Patagonia. However, scientists report a staggering 95% population decline over the last 40 years. At CMS COP15, this species is one of 42 animals proposed for upgraded international protection, highlighting the urgent need for "cross-border" environmental cooperation.

Key Challenges to Migration

Trophic Mismatch (Arctic): Climate change is causing spring to arrive earlier. Chicks now hatch after the peak of the insects they feed on, leading to higher mortality.

Stopover Habitat Loss (USA): Modern farming practices have drained the shallow wetlands in the Great Plains that these birds rely on to refuel during their 11,000 km non-stop flights.

Infrastructure Encroachment (Chile): Booming salmon and oyster farming in Patagonia has disturbed the intertidal zones where the birds spend their "southern summer."

3. CMS COP15: The "Pantanal" Summit (Static Context)

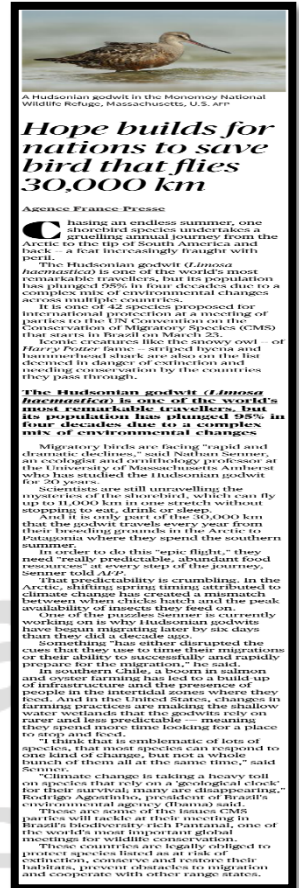
The CMS (also known as the Bonn Convention) is the only global treaty dedicated to migratory species.

Theme: "Connecting Nature to Sustain Life."

Appendix I vs. Appendix II: Appendix I: Includes species threatened with extinction. Parties must strictly protect them, conserve habitats, and eliminate migration obstacles.

Appendix II: Includes species that would significantly benefit from international cooperation.

Interim Report 2026: A new report released at the summit warns that 49% of CMS-listed species are now in decline, up from 44% in 2024.



Environmental Governance & Ecology

Ecological Significance

Migratory species act as ecological couriers, transporting nutrients across different biomes (e.g., from the Arctic to the Southern Hemisphere). Their decline is a leading indicator of ecological connectivity failure—where the "links" in the global habitat chain are breaking.

International Cooperation

The godwit's journey spans multiple sovereign territories. Its conservation requires a Flyway Approach, where nations (Canada, USA, Mexico, Brazil, Chile, etc.) align their land-use and climate policies. This reflects the principle of Common but Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) in a biological context.

Conclusion

The survival of the Hudsonian godwit is a litmus test for the effectiveness of the CMS. As Brazil assumes the COP Presidency, the focus is shifting toward "action-oriented" conservation that includes indigenous knowledge and socio-environmental commitments. For the godwit to survive, nations must move beyond listing species on paper and begin restoring the "predictable food resources" that fuel these marathon flights.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: The term "Trophic Mismatch" refers to:

- (a) Disruption in predator-prey relationships due to invasive species
- (b) Timing mismatch between species life cycles and food availability due to climate change
- (c) Loss of biodiversity in tropical ecosystems
- (d) Competition between native and alien species

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Explain the concept of "trophic mismatch" and examine its implications for biodiversity in the context of climate change. (150 Words)



Classes
Quality education

Despite the narrative of "resilient fundamentals," recent data on the Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) and revised GDP series indicate structural cooling. Stagnation in domestic energy production, coupled with a mismatch between production and sales ("change in stocks"), suggests that India's growth engines—Private Consumption and Capital Formation—are losing steam just as geopolitical volatility in West Asia spikes oil prices above \$100 a barrel.

The Core Sector Crisis (February 2026 Data)

The Index of Eight Core Industries, which measures the output of sectors comprising over 40% of the weight of the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), shows alarming trends:

Energy Contraction: Domestic crude oil has contracted in 20 out of the last 24 months. Natural gas has seen a 20-month consecutive decline.

Policy Oversight: The reliance on "cheap imports" led to a neglect of domestic production. The editorial argues that the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) should have been a signal to secure long-term LPG supplies and reserves, which was missed.

The "Base Effect" Fallacy: The slowdown to a three-month low in Feb 2026 cannot be blamed on a "high base," as the previous year's growth was also a modest 3.4%.

Structural Shifts in GDP

GDP Component	Current Trend (2022-26)	Significance
Private Final Consumption (PFCE)	Falling Share	Indicates subdued rural and urban demand.
Gross Fixed Capital Formation (GFCF)	Falling Share	Suggests a slowdown in private sector investment/capacity building.
Change in Stocks	Doubled	High inventory levels; goods are being produced but not sold (Demand-Supply gap).
Net Exports	Declining	Global headwinds and high

Grim future

India's economic fundamentals need a realistic reassessment

The economy has recently been yielding some discomfiting data, even before the war in West Asia began. The most recent of these was the February 2026 data on the Index of Eight Core Industries. This release showed that growth in the overall Index had dropped to a three-month low in February, half the rate of what it saw in January. This was not a case of a high base effect, either, with growth in February 2025 having been just 3.4%. The sector-wise data reveal further issues. The domestic crude oil industry has been contracting for six consecutive months. In fact, the sector has contracted in 20 out of the last 24 months. The natural gas sector, too, has contracted for the last 20 consecutive months. As context, from about the middle of last year, it had been increasingly clear that there would be some sort of escalation between the U.S. and Iran, even if the exact nature of the war now could not have been predicted then. It is no secret that India is highly dependent on energy imports, especially from the region that would have faced the brunt of any such escalation. As a matter of fact, a large part of the contraction in domestic production was likely because imports were coming cheap. Yet, as tensions increased, it might have been more prudent to have increased domestic oil and gas production over the last eight months so as to at least build reserves, if not to also temporarily reduce import dependence. Permanently reducing such dependence will take time, but a temporary domestic production push – as is belatedly underway – might have considerably alleviated the current supply crunch. Hindsight is 20-20, but that does not excuse a lack of foresight or an inability to learn. The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana of 2016 should have triggered a concerted policy to secure LPG supplies and reserves.

This poor core sector performance comes on top of the new series of GDP data showing that the Indian economy is actually smaller than previously thought. Further, between 2022-23 and 2025-26, the contributions to GDP of key engines such as private consumption, capital formation, exports and imports have all fallen. The share of 'change in stocks' has nearly doubled, however, meaning that there is production but not enough sales. Soon, that production too will reduce to fall in line with the subdued demand. All of this leads into the impact of the current crisis. With commercial fuel sources curtailed, oil prices at more than \$100 a barrel, and global economic uncertainty at a high, economists and rating agencies are already downgrading India's growth outlook to about 6.5%. Perhaps, India's much-vaunted macroeconomic fundamentals and resilience need a more realistic assessment.

GDP Component	Current Trend (2022-26)	Significance
	Contribution	energy import bills are widening the Current Account Deficit (CAD).

Economic Concepts

A. The "Change in Stocks" Warning

In national income accounting, a spike in "change in stocks" often precedes an industrial slowdown. When firms cannot sell what they produce, they eventually cut down on production, leading to lower GVA (Gross Value Added) and potential layoffs.

B. Energy Security & Geopolitics

India imports nearly 85% of its crude oil. The escalating conflict between the U.S. and Iran (as referenced in the 2026 context) acts as a "supply shock."

Inflation: High oil prices lead to "imported inflation," affecting the CPI (Consumer Price Index).

Fiscal Math: Rising subsidies (especially for LPG) and a higher import bill threaten the Fiscal Deficit targets.

C. The "New Series" Debate

The editorial mentions new GDP data showing the economy is "smaller than previously thought." This refers to periodic Base Year Revisions (currently moving toward 2022-23 or 2024-25), which can recalibrate growth percentages and the absolute size of the GDP.

Conclusion

The "Grim Future" warned of in the editorial suggests that India's resilience is being tested by a combination of internal production lethargy and external geopolitical shocks. For a sustainable recovery, the focus must shift from "import-dependence because it's cheap" to "strategic domestic autonomy." Strengthening the core sector is no longer just an economic goal—it is a matter of national security.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: In national income accounting, a rise in “Change in Stocks” indicates:

- (a) Increase in exports
- (b) Increase in unsold inventory
- (c) Increase in capital investment
- (d) Decrease in consumption

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: India's dependence on imported energy poses macroeconomic risks. Discuss in the context of recent geopolitical developments. **(250 Words)**



The rise of the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) with a two-thirds majority under leaders like Balendra Shah marks the definitive end of the "Old Guard" era in Kathmandu. Driven by young, tech-savvy professionals and supported by the "Gen Z" demographic, this new government is a response to the massive anti-establishment agitations of September 2025. For India, this represents a shift from dealing with traditional ideological allies to a pragmatic, delivery-oriented leadership.

Nepal's political shift opens a strategic window for India

The new government in Nepal extends an opportunity to fashion a forward-looking bilateral relationship

K.V. Rajan
Atul K. Thakur

The election results in Nepal have been described as a political earthquake. There has been an emphatic and comprehensive rejection of old leaders and established parties. A younger generation of professionals and tech savvy figures, enjoying the support of Gen Z activists is set to take over.

Challenges ahead

By giving the Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP) a two thirds majority, Nepali voters have granted Balendra Shah and his government, a powerful mandate for Nepal's complete transformation. It now has a huge responsibility to answer wide-ranging expectations—enough jobs for the youth, reversing the migration for

work abroad, stimulate economic growth, and ensure good governance. It needs to be noted, however, that while voters have demonstrated their impatience with the old order and its decades- old insensitivity to their aspirations, this is not a positive vote for a clear-cut new agenda for reform, political or economic, since it was never spelt out and placed before them.

There is a real possibility of frustration and disillusionment that the new government will have to deal with as it settles down. The first warning shots were fired by the caretaker Prime Minister Sushil Karki even before the election, when she reminded the political class that the agitations of September 2025 had erupted because of the frustrations of people insisting on good governance, and a recurrence was inevitable if the situation lapsed into the same old pattern. Hopefully the people of Nepal will give

the new leaders enough time to address the country's problems.

Restructuring India-Nepal ties

For now, Nepal deserves every encouragement possible. India has been quick to extend it, without being loud or patronising. India has not been an issue during the election campaign. Its relationship with Nepal in recent years has focused on the right priorities – development, infrastructure, digital connectivity, energy. It has played its cards well and can continue to capitalise on the existing goodwill as the new leaders in Nepal seek to respond to development needs of the people.

Restructuring of the India-Nepal relationship has been long overdue. For far too long it has been trapped in the shadows of the legacy of British India days. Hopefully India and Nepal will seize

every opportunity to fashion a forward-looking relationship based on today's realities and the immense potential for expanding cooperation. For this it will be necessary for policy makers on both sides to discard old mindsets, address long standing irritants with fresh approaches, and prioritise people-centric policies which can be delivered to keep pace with people's expectations and needs.

India also needs to look at the recent developments in Nepal as part of a wider regional phenomenon since happenings in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and elsewhere also fall into the same pattern—agitations led by frustrated youth incidentally toppling pro-India political figures, demanding faster development and better governance. Labeling new political leaders being thrown up everywhere as anti-India just because of the legacies of the past does not seem justified, as seen from the pragmatic readiness shown in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka to cooperate with India, by parties and leaders once seen as unfriendly. Nepal could be a good partner for India in the evolving geopolitical scenario, if both countries try seriously to fashion a clear cut sub-regional strategy for rapid growth.

(K.V. Rajan is former Indian Ambassador to Nepal and Atul K. Thakur is a policy professional. They are the authors of 'Kathmandu Chronicle: Reclaiming India-Nepal Relations'. Views are personal.)

THE GIST

▼ The people of Nepal have granted Balendra Shah and the RSP a powerful mandate for Nepal's complete transformation. The government now faces the challenge of addressing the issues of unemployment and providing good governance

▼ India has been quick to extend encouragement to the new leadership. Hopefully India and Nepal will seize every opportunity to fashion a forward-looking relationship based on today's realities

Key Challenges for the New Government

The "Job Crisis" Mandate: The primary driver for the RSP's win is the demand for domestic employment and reversing the massive outward migration of Nepali youth.

Good Governance: After decades of perceived insensitivity by established parties, the new leadership faces "implacable impatience" from voters.

Lack of a Formal Roadmap: While the mandate is powerful, the authors note that a specific reform agenda was never fully articulated, creating a risk of early disillusionment.

Implications for India-Nepal Relations

Pillar	Strategy/Status
Connectivity	Shift toward Digital Connectivity and cross-border energy grids (e.g., the 10,000 MW power export agreement).

Daily News Analysis

Pillar	Strategy/Status
Infrastructure	Focus on "High-Impact Community Development Projects" (HICDPs) that directly touch people's lives.
The "Legacy" Issue	Move away from the 1950 Treaty of Peace and Friendship shadows toward a partnership based on 21st-century economic realities.
Geopolitical Neutrality	Unlike previous cycles, "India-bashing" was notably absent from this election campaign, offering a window for "silent diplomacy."

Regional Context: The "Youth-Led" Pattern

The authors link Nepal's shift to a broader South Asian phenomenon seen in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka:

The Pattern: Frustrated youth toppling "pro-India" or "traditional" figures in favor of leaders demanding rapid development.

The India Response: India has moved away from labeling new leaders as "anti-India" based on past rhetoric, opting instead for pragmatic engagement (as seen with the interim setups in Dhaka and Colombo).

Strategic Analysis

Neighborhood First 2.0

India's current approach in Nepal emphasizes "Non-reciprocity" and "Economic Integration." By focusing on energy trade and petroleum pipelines (like the Motihari-Amlekhgunj pipeline), India is making itself indispensable to Nepal's economic recovery regardless of which party is in power.

Sub-regional Strategy

Nepal is a key pillar of the BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal) initiative. A stable, growth-focused government in Kathmandu is essential for the success of the Eastern South Asia sub-regional energy and transport grid.

Conclusion

The emergence of a professional, "non-political" leadership in Nepal offers India a chance to "reclaim" the relationship. By discarding the patronizing "Big Brother" mindset and prioritizing people-centric delivery, India can align itself with the aspirations of Nepal's youth. As Rajan and Thakur suggest, the "strategic window" is open; the challenge lies in ensuring that bilateral irritants (like border issues or treaty revisions) are handled with fresh, pragmatic approaches rather than old bureaucratic dogmas.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: The BBIN initiative includes which of the following countries?

- (a) Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal
- (b) Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar
- (c) Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka
- (d) Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives

Ans: a)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: The rise of new political forces in Nepal marks a shift from ideology-driven to performance-driven politics. Analyze its implications for India–Nepal relations. **(250 Words)**



Page : 08 : Editorial Analysis

GS Paper II: Social Justice

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question: The shift from symptom-based screening to a technology-led 'comprehensive toolbox' is essential for India's goal of TB elimination." Discuss the role of AI and molecular diagnostics in overcoming the challenges of the TB diagnostic cascade. **(250 Words)**

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question: Tuberculosis is often described as a "social disease." Examine the role of social determinants in its persistence and suggest measures to address them. **(150 Words)**

Article 01.

Context :

As of World TB Day (March 24, 2026), the global and Indian approach to tuberculosis has moved beyond simple sputum microscopy. The WHO now endorses near point-of-care (nPOC) molecular tests and non-invasive samples (like tongue swabs), while India has integrated Artificial Intelligence (AI) with portable X-rays to take screening directly into vulnerable communities.

A decade of building India's TB Champion movement

In early 2017, at a workshop in New Delhi, Cedric Fernandes, a tuberculosis (TB) survivor and advocate from Maharashtra, said to a room full of other TB survivors, "It has been very lonely having this disease. I am fed up with the loneliness and I hope all of you are too." Addressing the organising team at the workshop, he gently admonished us: "I am so glad that someone is finally bringing us together ... but what took so long?"

India diagnoses and treats over 25 lakh people with TB every year, which means that there are hundreds of thousands of individuals such as Cedric, who are coming to terms with the disease and fighting to overcome it. Their path, from diagnosis to cure, is often fraught with challenges in an ecosystem where stigma and social exclusion continue to thrive within communities. TB remains one of the most stigmatised illnesses in both urban and rural India; stigma and discrimination uniquely impact women, men, transgender communities, children and adolescents, the elderly and other socially vulnerable groups.

Challenging the belief

One of the early criticisms of the global TB response was that it remained stubbornly biomedical, focusing solely on clinical interventions whilst excluding communities and devaluing lived experience. Back in 2016, when we first began to imagine and build our wish list for how TB-affected communities – people with TB, TB survivors and their families – could play a greater role, there were many sceptics. Most of all, we were told that TB survivors, unlike people living with HIV, would want to move on with their lives once they had completed treatment, and would not be interested in becoming peer supporters or advocates. Ten years later, the evolution of the TB Champion movement in India has firmly dispelled this notion. TB Champions are survivors who are passionate, motivated and committed individuals, firm in their conviction



Dr. Nalini Krishnan

is Co-Founder and Executive Secretary of the Resource Group for Education and Advocacy for Community Health (REACH), a non-profit organisation working on tuberculosis (TB) for 27 years and a pioneer of the TB Survivor to Champion model



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Survivors become 'TB Champions', supporting treatment, awareness and community engagement

that they have an important role to play in India's response to TB.

India's National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) provides access to high-quality free diagnostics and treatment. Over the last few years, diagnosis and case-finding have accelerated, and treatment outcomes have steadily improved, which means that more people are being cured and mortality has reduced, with fewer people dying of TB. Newer strategies – Artificial Intelligence-enabled screening, active case-finding within communities, shorter and less toxic treatment regimens, expanded nutrition support, differentiated care approaches – have been adopted. But even the most robust health system cannot achieve elimination of any disease on its own, without active community participation. This is where TB Champions are uniquely poised to draw on their own personal experiences of TB to be powerful communicators and advocates for changes.

'Empower, support, educate'

In the early years of working with TB survivors, our focus was on developing the 'Survivor to Champion' training curriculum, which has since been formally adopted by the NTEP.

The involvement of TB Champions has reaffirmed a conviction that we have held from our inception – that a person with TB needs emotional support and motivation to get them through the treatment period, as much as they need high-quality clinical care. TB Champion-led peer counselling, through both one-to-one communication and support groups, has helped to improve treatment literacy and empowered people with TB with the knowledge they need. We have found a greater level of confidence and comfort among people with TB who have been supported by TB Champions and a significant reduction in self-stigmatisation. Even today, myths and misconceptions about

TB persist. TB Champions have played a critical role in dispelling these and in improving knowledge of TB, the symptoms of the disease and where to seek care. They literally reach the last mile through regular community meetings, where they talk about the disease, share their own stories and reassure people that TB is a treatable and curable disease. This has been a powerful anti-stigma strategy, enabling people to come forward to seek diagnosis and treatment.

Building networks, looking ahead

In addition, over the last decade, TB Champions in several States have come together to form survivor-led networks. These collective entities are naturally designed to be a powerful bridge between those seeking care and those providing services, especially among social vulnerable groups. Importantly, networks have become a source of strength for TB survivors, many of whom continue to experience the physical, social and

economic toll of the disease even after being cured. However, the long-term future and sustainability of networks remains uncertain, given that they are dependent on external resources for funding. The next challenge is to test and build self-sustaining socio-economic models for survivor-led networks.

Over the last 10 years, we have been humbled by the trust that thousands of TB Champions from across the country have placed in us. They have travelled long distances to attend our workshops, sharing their TB journeys and stories, their pain and successes. They have become empowered local leaders, unafraid to use the TB Champion moniker to refer to themselves. They remain staunchly committed to working with their communities – supporting people with TB and their families, talking about stigma, meeting their panchayat leaders – and doing all of this for one simple, powerful reason – so that no one else should suffer like I did.



The Shift in Diagnostic Tools

The article highlights a transition from hospital-centric diagnosis to community-based "active case finding."

Technology	Feature	Impact
AI-Enabled CXR	Portable X-rays interpreted by algorithms.	Removes the need for a radiologist on-site; allows "opportunistic screening" in clinics.
nPOC-NAAT	Molecular tests (like Truenat) at the primary care level.	Highly sensitive; detects drug resistance (MDR-TB) within hours.
Tongue Swabs/Saliva	Non-sputum based sampling.	Critical for children and elderly who struggle to produce sputum.
Sputum Pooling	Testing multiple samples together.	Increases efficiency and reduces costs in high-volume screening.

Key Challenges & Research Priorities

A. The "Diagnostic Cascade" Attrition

A major hurdle in India is the **attrition** (loss of patients) between screening and treatment. If a portable X-ray shows a lesion, the patient must provide a sample immediately on-site. Any delay in transportation or testing leads to patients dropping out of the system.

B. Asymptomatic and Extra-Pulmonary TB (EP-TB)

Asymptomatic TB: The National TB Survey indicates many patients show no symptoms, meaning X-ray screening is more effective than just asking about a cough.

EP-TB: Accounting for 25% of India's TB burden, it affects organs other than the lungs (e.g., lymph nodes, spine). Diagnosis is currently expensive and slow; pilots using AI-enabled portable ultrasound are being explored.

C. Pediatric TB

Children often have "paucibacillary" TB (low bacterial load), making standard tests fail. Research is shifting toward stool-based testing and saliva biomarkers to bridge this gap.

India's Policy Initiatives

National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP): India aims to eliminate TB by 2025 (five years ahead of the global SDG 2030 target).

Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan: Focuses on community support (Ni-kshay Mitras) and active screening.

Truenat: An indigenous, battery-operated molecular diagnostic machine that has been a game-changer for decentralized testing in rural India.

Ni-kshay Portal: A unified ICT device for monitoring TB patients and ensuring treatment adherence.

Conclusion: ROI in Public Health

Dr. Swaminathan emphasizes that strengthening diagnostics provides the highest Return on Investment (ROI). Early diagnosis reduces:

Transmission: One untreated TB patient can infect 10–15 people a year.

Morbidity: Prevents permanent lung damage.

Out-of-Pocket Expenditure: Saves families from "catastrophic costs" associated with late-stage private care.

Article 02.

Context :

While India's medical interventions (AI screening, shorter drug regimens) have advanced significantly, the "loneliness" and "stigma" of TB remain major barriers to elimination. The TB Champion movement—comprising survivors who turn into advocates—has dispelled the myth that TB patients only want to hide their diagnosis. Today, these "Champions" act as the vital bridge between the clinical health system and the socially excluded.

A decade of building India's TB Champion movement

In early 2017, at a workshop in New Delhi, Cedric Fernandes, a tuberculosis (TB) survivor and advocate from Maharashtra, said to a room full of other TB survivors, "It has been very lonely having this disease. I am fed up with the loneliness and I hope all of you are too." Addressing the organising team at the workshop, he gently admonished us: "I am so glad that someone is finally bringing us together ... but what took so long?"

India diagnoses and treats over 25 lakh people with TB every year, which means that there are hundreds of thousands of individuals such as Cedric, who are coming to terms with the disease and fighting to overcome it. Their path, from diagnosis to cure, is often fraught with challenges in an ecosystem where stigma and social exclusion continue to thrive within communities. TB remains one of the most stigmatised illnesses in both urban and rural India; stigma and discrimination uniquely impact women, men, transgender communities, children and adolescents, the elderly and other socially vulnerable groups.

Challenging the belief

One of the early criticisms of the global TB response was that it remained stubbornly biomedical, focusing solely on clinical interventions whilst excluding communities and devaluing lived experience. Back in 2016, when we first began to imagine and build our wish list for how TB-affected communities – people with TB, TB survivors and their families – could play a greater role, there were many sceptics. Most of all, we were told that TB survivors, unlike people living with HIV, would want to move on with their lives once they had completed treatment, and would not be interested in becoming peer supporters or advocates. Ten years later, the evolution of the TB Champion movement in India has firmly dispelled this notion. TB Champions are survivors who are passionate, motivated and committed individuals, firm in their conviction



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Survivors become 'TB Champions', supporting treatment, awareness and community engagement

that they have an important role to play in India's response to TB.

India's National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP) provides access to high-quality free diagnostics and treatment. Over the last few years, diagnosis and case-finding have accelerated, and treatment outcomes have steadily improved, which means that more people are being cured and mortality has reduced, with fewer people dying of TB. Newer strategies – Artificial Intelligence-enabled screening, active case-finding within communities, shorter and less toxic treatment regimens, expanded nutrition support, differentiated care approaches – have been adopted. But even the most robust health system cannot achieve elimination of any disease on its own, without active community participation. This is where TB Champions are uniquely poised to draw on their own personal experiences of TB to be powerful communicators and advocates for changes.

'Empower, support, educate'

In the early years of working with TB survivors, our focus was on developing the 'Survivor to Champion' training curriculum, which has since been formally adopted by the NTEP.

The involvement of TB Champions has reaffirmed a conviction that we have held from our inception – that a person with TB needs emotional support and motivation to get them through the treatment period, as much as they need high-quality clinical care. TB Champion-led peer counselling, through both one-to-one communication and support groups, has helped to improve treatment literacy and empowered people with TB with the knowledge they need. We have found a greater level of confidence and comfort among people with TB who have been supported by TB Champions and a significant reduction in self-stigmatisation.

Even today, myths and misconceptions about

TB persist. TB Champions have played a critical role in dispelling these and in improving knowledge of TB, the symptoms of the disease and where to seek care. They literally reach the last mile through regular community meetings, where they talk about the disease, share their own stories and reassure people that TB is a treatable and curable disease. This has been a powerful anti-stigma strategy, enabling people to come forward to seek diagnosis and treatment.

Building networks, looking ahead

In addition, over the last decade, TB Champions in several States have come together to form survivor-led networks. These collective entities are naturally designed to be a powerful bridge between those seeking care and those providing services, especially among social vulnerable groups. Importantly, networks have become a source of strength for TB survivors, many of whom continue to experience the physical, social and



economic toll of the disease even after being cured. However, the long-term future and sustainability of networks remains uncertain, given that they are dependent on external resources for funding. The next challenge is to test and build self-sustaining socio-economic models for survivor-led networks.

Over the last 10 years, we have been humbled by the trust that thousands of TB Champions from across the country have placed in us. They have travelled long distances to attend our workshops, sharing their TB journeys and stories, their pain and successes. They have become empowered local leaders, unafraid to use the TB Champion moniker to refer to themselves. They remain staunchly committed to working with their communities – supporting people with TB and their families, talking about stigma, meeting their panchayat leaders – and doing all of this for one simple, powerful reason – 'so that no one else should suffer like I did'.

Evolution: From Survivor to Champion

The movement challenges the traditional skepticism that TB survivors would not want to engage in advocacy due to social of stigma.

The Model: Based on the "Peer Support" success of the HIV/AIDS movement.

The Shift: Moving from being "passive recipients" of medicine to "active agents" of change.

NTEP Integration: The 'Survivor to Champion' training curriculum has been formally adopted by the National TB Elimination Programme.

3. Roles and Impact of TB Champions

Function	Description	Impact
Peer	One-to-one emotional support during the grueling	Reduces "self-stigmatization" and improves

Function	Description	Impact
Counseling	treatment period.	treatment adherence.
Treatment Literacy	Explaining the side effects and importance of completing the course.	Empowers patients with knowledge, reducing the "drop-out" rate.
Stigma Busting	Sharing personal stories in community meetings and Panchayats.	Reassures the community that TB is curable; encourages early testing.
Last-Mile Reach	Reaching vulnerable groups (transgender, tribal, elderly) that formal systems might miss.	Ensures "inclusive" healthcare delivery.

4. Static Context: Community Participation in Health

A. The Social Determinants of TB

TB is often called a "**Social Disease**" because its spread is linked to:

Malnutrition: Weakens the immune system (addressed via Nikshay Poshan Yojana).

Overcrowding: Common in urban slums.

Stigma: Leads to delayed diagnosis as people hide symptoms to avoid social exclusion.

B. Institutional Framework

Nikshay Mitras: Under the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan, individuals and organizations can "adopt" TB patients to provide nutritional and vocational support.

Patient Provider Support Agencies (PPSA): Engage the private sector and NGOs (like REACH) to standardize TB care.

Challenges and the Road Ahead

Sustainability: Most survivor-led networks currently depend on external funding (NGOs/Grants).

Socio-Economic Integration: Cured survivors often face lingering physical weakness or economic loss. The next step is building self-sustaining models (like cooperatives or skill-training) for these networks.

Differentiated Care: Moving toward "person-centered" care where the emotional and social needs of the patient are treated as importantly as the bacterial load.

Conclusion

The TB Champion movement proves that "lived experience" is a potent clinical tool. By turning a source of shame (the disease) into a badge of leadership (the Champion), India is tackling the psychological roots of the TB epidemic. As Dr. Krishnan notes, the health system can provide the pills, but only the community can provide the "will" to finish them.