

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

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The recent visit of External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar to Trinidad and Tobago (May 8–9, 2026) marks a significant milestone in India's "Connect Caribbean" strategy. By signing eight Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and focusing on the Girmitya heritage, India is blending "soft power" with "hard infrastructure" to deepen its footprint in the CARICOM (Caribbean Community) region.

India-Trinidad pact to help diaspora trace ancestral roots: Jaishankar

Press Trust of India
PORT OF SPAIN

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar said here on Sunday that an archival cooperation agreement between India and Trinidad and Tobago would help members of the Indian diaspora trace their ancestral roots and reconnect with families, as he underlined New Delhi's efforts to preserve the legacy of the Girmitya community.

Girmitya refers to Indian indentured labourers transported by the British to colonies in Fiji, South Africa, Mauritius, and the Caribbean between the 19th and early 20th centuries. Addressing a gathering at the historic Nelson Island on Saturday, Mr. Jaishankar recalled the ar-



Union Minister S Jaishankar interacts with the Indian diaspora of Trinidad and Tobago in Port of Spain on Sunday. PTI

rival of the first Indian indentured labourers in Trinidad and Tobago 180 years ago. He paid tribute to their "fortitude, determination and resolve" in building new lives under difficult circumstances.

He said the immigrants had carried with them their traditions, faith and

way of life, adding that it was fitting for such history to be preserved as a heritage site.

Mr. Jaishankar said Prime Minister Narendra Modi attached high importance to creating a database of the Girmitya community and conducting research on its legacy.

He said India was working towards establishing a dedicated Girmitya Studies Centre on Mr. Modi's directions.

Referring to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the National Archives of India and Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Jaishankar said he hoped the agreement would help many people in the Caribbean nation in "tracing their ancestral roots and reconnecting with their families in India".

He also noted that the Indian High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago was receiving a growing number of applications for Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cards after Mr. Modi announced the extension of OCI eligibility up to the sixth generation.

1. Historical & Cultural Context: The Girmitya Legacy

A central theme of the visit was the **180th anniversary** of the arrival of Indian indentured labourers in Trinidad.

- **Definition:** The term 'Girmitya' is derived from "Agreement." Between 1834 and 1917, the British transported millions of Indians to colonies to replace slave labor.
- **Nelson Island:** This site served as the first point of entry for Indian immigrants. India has pledged grant assistance for its infrastructure upgrade, including a **memorial monument** and a **digital hub** for historical data.
- **Archival Cooperation:** The MoU between the National Archives of India and Trinidad and Tobago is a specialized tool for **Diaspora Diplomacy**. It enables the 5th and 6th generation diaspora to use colonial records to trace their "root villages" in India.

2. Key Agreements and Initiatives (The 8 MoUs)

The visit transitioned from purely cultural ties to **Multidimensional Strategic Cooperation**.

Sector	Key Initiative / MoU	Significance
Health	National Prosthetics Centre (Penal)	Exporting India's low-cost, high-tech medical expertise (e.g., Jaipur Foot model).
Traditional Medicine	Indian Chair on Ayurveda	Promoting Ayush as a global alternative healthcare system.
Infrastructure	Solarisation of Foreign Ministry	Part of India's commitment to ISA (International Solar Alliance) and climate action.
Education	2,000 Laptops for Students	Leveraging India's digital prowess to build "goodwill" among the youth.
Agriculture	Agro-processing facility	Enhancing food security and value addition in the Caribbean.

3. Diplomatic Significance for UPSC

A. Diaspora as a Strategic Asset

India has extended **Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI)** eligibility to the **6th generation**. This shift treats the "Old Diaspora" (descendants of indentured laborers) with the same strategic importance as the "New Diaspora" (IT professionals in the US/UK), ensuring long-term emotional and economic bonds.

B. Leader of the Global South

By providing digital support, healthcare infrastructure, and climate-resilient energy (solar), India is positioning itself as a reliable partner for Small Island Developing States (SIDS). This counters the "debt-trap" narratives often associated with other global powers in the region.

C. Institutionalizing Relations

The establishment of a **Girmitiya Studies Centre** in India signifies the institutionalization of cultural diplomacy, moving beyond sporadic visits to permanent research and academic exchange.

4. Challenges to Overcome

- **Geographical Distance:** Logistics and connectivity remain the biggest hurdles for trade.
- **Economic Scale:** The small market size of individual Caribbean nations requires India to engage through the collective **CARICOM** block rather than just bilateral tracks.
- **Competition:** Increasing presence of other major powers in the Caribbean for maritime and resource influence.

Conclusion

The India-Trinidad and Tobago pacts of 2026 represent a sophisticated "360-degree" foreign policy. By helping the diaspora trace their roots, India isn't just looking at the past; it is building a sentimental and cultural bridge that facilitates future cooperation in technology, healthcare, and energy. For India, the Caribbean is no longer a distant "exotic" region, but a vital pillar in its **Global South** outreach and a testament to the enduring strength of the Indian identity.

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: "India's engagement with the Caribbean reflects the growing role of diaspora diplomacy in foreign policy." Discuss in the context of the recent India-Trinidad and Tobago agreements. **(150 Words)**



As India assumes the Chair of the **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)**, the region faces an unprecedented security crisis. The ongoing conflict in West Asia, involving major maritime disruptions in the **Strait of Hormuz** and missile exchanges near **Diego Garcia**, has elevated maritime security from a peripheral issue to a "primordial" necessity for regional survival.

'Maritime security is of primordial importance to Indian Ocean Region'

Any disruption in the Indian Ocean will have a deep impact on the economy across the region, says Sanjiv Ranjan, Secretary-General of the Indian Ocean Rim Association; India chairs the 23-nation grouping; a summit marking its 30th anniversary is expected to be held next year, he adds

Suhasini Haidar
NEW DELHI

Navigating maritime security in the wake of the war in West Asia will be at the top of the agenda as India chairs the 23-nation Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), with a leaders' summit expected next year, says the organisation's Secretary-General Sanjiv Ranjan.

In addition to raising the profile of the IORA, the government is expected to focus on the specific challenges arising from the war in West Asia, including the violence in the region and the Hormuz Strait blockades by Iran and the U.S. Last week, Mr. Ranjan had co-hosted the Indian Ocean Dialogue in Delhi, which was attended by Ministers from India, Mauritius and Yemen, besides representatives from both Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, he said while bilateral differences are not discussed at the grouping, the Gulf war has raised issues of "primordial importance" for the IOR countries.

"The increasing realisa-

tion from the contemporary situation is that maritime safety and security is of primordial importance for our energy security, our food security, [and] many livelihoods, which are involved as a result of the developments in Indian Ocean littoral areas," he said, referring to all countries with coastlines on the Indian Ocean.

Two-day dialogue

Delivering a keynote address to the two-day dialogue, Mauritius Foreign Minister Dhananjay Ramful said that the "ideal of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace" has been negated and "war has come" to the ocean. Mr. Ramful called the U.S.'s sinking of the Iranian naval ship *IRIS Dena*, in which 100 sailors were killed in March, as "outrageous" and also expressed concern over retaliatory Iranian attacks using Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) on the U.S.'s Diego Garcia base on Mauritius's Chagos Islands.

"They might not have reached their target, but they have nonetheless breached our comfortable



IORA Secretary-General Sanjiv Ranjan says member countries have seen fuel prices rise considerably due to war. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

status quo. They have introduced in our region of the Indian Ocean an intent of aggression hitherto unknown," Mr. Ramful added.

According to the IORA charter, "bilateral and other issues likely to generate controversy and be an impediment to regional cooperation efforts will be excluded from deliberations". However, they will discuss the "socio-economic" impact of the conflict in talks on eight priority areas: maritime safety and security, trade and investment, fisheries management, disaster risk management, tourism, cul-

tural exchanges, blue economy and women's economic empowerment, Mr. Ranjan said.

"Without a doubt, any disruption in the Indian Ocean will have a deep impact on the economy across the region. The tourism sector is affected badly especially due to airline disruptions. Fuel prices in many of our member countries have increased considerably, some have had to shut down offices and schools. In the long term, inflation, agricultural output and productivity – impacted due to fertilizer shortages – will all hurt the region. A big worry is that

[due to the war] situations where fisherman are unable to go out to the sea for fishing will affect livelihoods," Mr. Ranjan told *The Hindu*.

The IORA Summit in 2027 will mark the organisation's 30th anniversary, said Mr. Ranjan, adding that the last time such a summit had been held was in 2017, when Indonesia marked the IORA's 20th anniversary in Jakarta. In the run-up to that, India will host the Senior Officials Meeting, in June this year, while the IORA Council of Ministers would meet towards the end of 2026.

Series of meetings

The Indian Ocean dialogue, which was a "track 1.5" conference for officials, academics and experts, co-hosted by the IORA and the Ministry of External Affairs and organised by the Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), will kick off a series of meetings expected over the coming year, as India seeks to recharge the IORA.

The grouping was formed in 1997 with former South African leader

Nelson Mandela amongst those leading it. However, the IORA has not received the relevance that other regional groupings have, such as the now-defunct SAARC, BIMSTEC, SCO or Quad, over three decades.

In addition to its salience in India's MAHASAGAR maritime policy and Indo-Pacific strategy, the IORA is less contentious for India as Pakistan has never been admitted to its ranks. Pakistan had requested membership in the early 2000s, but the fact that it refused to grant India "MFN status" for trade violated the IORA charter that calls for "sovereign equality" or equal treatment of all states, according to officials.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) currently comprises 23 member states, including Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

1. IORA: The "Sleeping Giant" of Regional Groupings

Established in 1997 (inspired by Nelson Mandela), IORA is a 23-nation intercontinental organization.

- **Strategic Advantage for India:** Unlike other groupings, **Pakistan is not a member** of IORA, as it failed to meet the "sovereign equality" trade criteria (MFN status). This allows India to lead regional initiatives without the traditional South Asian bilateral friction.
- **The 30th Anniversary:** India is revitalizing the grouping with a planned **Leaders' Summit in 2027**, the first since 2017.

2. The Current Crisis: Beyond "Bilateralism"

While IORA's charter prohibits discussing bilateral disputes to maintain cooperation, the "socio-economic impact" of the West Asia war has forced these issues onto the agenda.

- **Geopolitical Flashpoints:**

- **Strait of Hormuz:** Frequent blockades affecting global energy transit.
- **Diego Garcia & Chagos Islands:** The use of Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) in this zone marks a shift from a "zone of peace" to a "zone of active conflict."

- **Economic Blowback:**

- **Energy & Food Security:** Rising fuel prices and fertilizer shortages are crippling agricultural productivity.
- **Livelihoods:** Coastal communities and fishermen are unable to access the sea, directly threatening the **Blue Economy**.
- **Tourism:** Airline disruptions due to regional instability are hurting island nations like Mauritius and Seychelles.

3. India's Policy Framework: MAHASAGAR & SAGAR

India's leadership in IORA aligns with its broader maritime doctrines:

- **MAHASAGAR:** (Maritime Heads for Active Security and Growth for All in the Region) – Focuses on high-level leadership engagement for collective security.
- **SAGAR:** (Security and Growth for All in the Region) – India's 2015 vision to act as a **Net Security Provider** and "First Responder" in the Indian Ocean.

4. IORA's Eight Priority Areas for 2026-27

Under India's chairmanship, the focus remains on institutionalizing cooperation across:

1. **Maritime Safety and Security** (The foremost priority)
2. **Trade and Investment Facilitation**
3. **Fisheries Management**
4. **Disaster Risk Management**
5. **Tourism and Cultural Exchanges**
6. **Academic, Science and Technology**
7. **Blue Economy**
8. **Women's Economic Empowerment**

Conclusion

The Indian Ocean is the world's "central trade artery," and any blockage there results in global economic "cardiac arrest." India's move to "recharge" the IORA at its 30th anniversary is a strategic masterstroke. By focusing on the shared socio-economic vulnerabilities of the 23 member states, New Delhi is positioning itself as the stabilizing force in an increasingly volatile maritime landscape. The upcoming 2027 Summit will be the ultimate test of whether the Indian Ocean can return to being a "Zone of Peace" or remain a theater of great power competition.

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: "The Indian Ocean is emerging as the epicentre of 21st-century geopolitics." Discuss in the context of India's chairmanship of IORA. (150 Words)



Page 08: GS II : Governance and Social Justice / Prelims Exam

The Union Labour Ministry's recent announcement to provide **free annual health check-ups** for workers aged 40 and above marks a critical step toward preventive occupational health. However, as the analysis of the programme suggests, the transition from "health on paper" to "health in practice" faces structural and economic hurdles.

1. The Core Initiative: Leveraging the ESI Ecosystem

The programme is a practical expansion of the **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code 2020**.

- **Financial Backing:** The scheme utilizes the **Employees' State Insurance (ESI) fund**, which is historically well-funded through employer-employee contributions.
- **Mandatory Screening:** For workers in **hazardous industries** (chemicals, heavy machinery), these check-ups are compulsory, shifting the burden of detection from the employee to the system.
- **Treatment Integration:** If an illness is detected, the ESIC network provides free treatment, theoretically creating a seamless "Screen-to-Treat" pipeline.

2. Critical Gaps & "Opportunity Cost"

The primary critique of the scheme is that it treats medical care as a free service but ignores the **cost of time**.

- **Wage Loss:** For a daily-wage worker, a day spent at an ESIC camp is a day of lost earnings. Without a "compensation token" or wage-loss indemnity for the check-up day, the poorest workers are likely to skip the screening.
- **Referral Fatigue:** A lack of specialized equipment at primary ESIC dispensaries leads to "referral chains." Repeated visits to different centers multiply the opportunity cost (transportation + lost work).
- **The Gender Gap:** Women in the informal sector (domestic workers, home-based garment workers) often lack a formal "employer," making it difficult to claim benefits like extended maternity leave or access male-dominated, crowded ESIC camps.

3. Occupational Blind Spots: NCDs vs. Environmental Risks

The current focus of the check-ups is predominantly on **Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)** like diabetes and hypertension. While vital, this misses sector-specific risks:

Cost to access

The opportunity cost of accessing medical care remains high

The Union Labour Ministry has announced that it will provide a free annual health check-up to workers aged 40 years or more, following an existing provision in the new Labour Codes. The programme will be implemented through the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC). For workers in hazardous conditions, such as handling toxic chemicals or operating heavy machinery, check-ups are mandatory; if illness is detected, ESIC hospitals and dispensaries will provide free treatment. India already has a few workers' health obligations on paper, including under the Factories Act 1948 (only within factories), the ESI Act 1948, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSH) Code 2020. The new programme will be financed through the well-endowed ESI fund, although the government is still shoring up the number of beds and doctors available via PMJAY-empanelled facilities. At this time, operational evidence suggests that insured workers will be the main beneficiaries.

Commendable though the initiative is, its success is not guaranteed. At present, only around 31 crore of 94 crore workers are on the e-Shram portal, whose integration with ESIC is still in its early stages in many States. Labour Minister Mansukh Mandaviya also failed to address how a woman working in a garment home unit or as a domestic worker could access the longer maternity leave if she has no 'employer'. Annual check-ups for women also warrant specific medical staff needs whereas many ESIC camps are crowded and dominated by men. As with many of its predecessors, the programme does not address the opportunity costs of accessing health care, forcing workers to continue contending with lost wages. An ESIC facility may also refer a worker to another centre if it lacks the resources for specific tests, leading to repeat visits and added time and cost. The new programme focuses predominantly on non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. Heat-related illnesses are not explicitly recognised as occupational diseases under the ESI Act whereas construction and agriculture workers are most at risk of them. Wastepickers and sanitation workers on the other hand face greater risk of infectious diseases such as hepatitis and leptospirosis. The scheme offers screening but does not mandate proactive vaccination. The government must meet workers where they are, through mobile occupational health units and – as the OSH Code 2020 stipulates for organised workers – at their places of work, and provide tokens to compensate them for time spent on check-ups. Otherwise, any scheme of this nature will not improve upon the already deficient system.

Worker Category	Unaddressed Risk	Needed Intervention
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Daily News Analysis

Worker Category	Unaddressed Risk	Needed Intervention
Construction/Agri	Heat-related illnesses	Recognition as "Occupational Disease" under ESI Act.
Sanitation/Waste	Infectious diseases (Hepatitis, Leptospirosis)	Mandatory proactive vaccination, not just screening.
Industrial Labor	Respiratory issues/Silicosis	Mobile Occupational Health Units (MOHUs).

4. Strategic Recommendations for Implementation

To move beyond a "deficient system," the analysis suggests three structural shifts:

1. **Mobile Health Units:** Instead of forcing workers to travel to hospitals, the government should "meet workers where they are" via mobile units at factory gates and construction sites.
2. **e-Shram Integration:** Accelerating the link between the **e-Shram portal** (94 crore potential workers) and the ESIC database is essential to cover the unorganized sector.
3. **Compensatory Tokens:** Providing a financial incentive or "attendance token" to cover the day's lost wages would significantly increase the uptake of preventive check-ups.

Conclusion

The Union Labour Ministry's initiative is a commendable shift toward a **preventive healthcare model** for India's workforce. However, in a country where the informal sector dominates, "free" care is not truly free if it costs a day's meal. For the OSH Code 2020 to be successful, the government must address the **opportunity cost** of health and expand the definition of "occupational hazards" to include the realities of climate change and infectious risks faced by the most marginalized workers.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques : Silicosis, often seen in industrial labour discussions, is primarily associated with:

- (a) Viral infection
- (b) Water contamination
- (c) Inhalation of silica dust
- (d) Chemical burns

Ans: c)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Preventive healthcare is essential for improving labour productivity and social security in India. Discuss in the context of the recent Labour Ministry initiative for annual health check-ups. **(150 Words)**

The recent political developments in Tamil Nadu, where the **Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK)** formed a government despite falling short of a clear majority, have reignited the constitutional debate over the Governor's discretionary powers. In a federal structure, the Governor's role during government formation is often the ultimate test of constitutional impartiality.

Governor's role in govt. formation

What does Article 164(i) say about the appointment of the Chief Minister? When does the Governor use discretionary powers? Which commissions recommended guidelines for government formation in a hung Assembly? Why has the conduct of Governors in hung Assemblies raised concerns?

EXPLAINER

Rangarajan R.

The story so far:

The Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) secured 108 seats, 10 short of a majority, in the recently concluded Tamil Nadu Assembly elections. After hectic parleys with smaller parties, letters of support from 120 members were provided to the Governor. The Governor then invited TVK chief C. Joseph Vijay to form the government, who was sworn in as Chief Minister.

What are constitutional provisions?

Article 164(i) of the Constitution provides that the Chief Minister of a State shall be appointed by the Governor, while other ministers shall be appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister. When a single party secures a clear majority in the Assembly, the Governor invites the leader of that legislative party to form the government. If no party secures a majority, the Governor exercises his/her discretion in appointing the Chief Minister.

The Constitution does not prescribe any criteria for selecting the Chief Minister in the event of a hung Assembly. The Sarkaria Commission (1987), followed by the Punchhi Commission (2010), recommended the manner in which the Chief Minister may be appointed in case no party enjoys a majority in the Assembly. The order of preference indicated by these commissions is as follows – first a pre-poll alliance that enjoys majority; next the single largest party staking a claim to form the government with the support of others; then a post-electoral coalition of parties, with all partners in the coalition joining the government; and finally, a



Fresh start: Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Arlekar with Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay, on Sunday, PTI

post-electoral alliance with some parties joining the government and the remaining parties supporting the government from outside.

What are the issues?

The recommendations of the above commissions and conventions require Governors to act in a bipartisan manner while selecting the Chief Minister in a hung Assembly. However, Governors have, on numerous occasions, appointed Chief Ministers without following any particular order.

For instance, after the Assembly elections in Goa (2017) and Manipur (2017), the Governors invited BJP-led post-poll alliances to form the government, even though the Congress had emerged as the single largest party. These governments later proved their majority in the Assembly. On the contrary, in Karnataka (2018), the Governor invited the BJP, as the single

largest party, to form the government over a claim by the post-poll alliance of Congress and Janata Dal (Secular). In 2019, the Governor of Maharashtra appointed a BJP-led coalition government when there was uncertainty as to whether it enjoyed a majority. On both occasions, the Chief Ministers had to resign as they were unable to muster the required majority.

Under the Constitution, the Governor is the nominal head of the State executive and possesses certain discretionary powers in specific situations. The discretion vested in the Governor to select a Chief Minister in a hung Assembly is to enable him/her to appoint a government that would be stable and enjoy the majority in the Assembly. However, the conduct of Governors in several such situations has raised concerns that they often function more as agents of the Union government than as impartial constitutional heads of the States.

What can be the way forward?

In the current situation in Tamil Nadu, TVK was the only party to stake a claim to form the government. The Governor's office indicated that, since the claim was a post-poll alliance, it was essential to validate whether the formation enjoyed the majority support of 118 members. However, the constitutional requirement for a government is to have the support of the majority of members present and voting in the Assembly. The majority of 118 in the Tamil Nadu Assembly is based on the full strength of the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly and does not account for possible abstentions during the vote.

The Supreme Court in the *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994) had categorically held that the 'floor of the House' is the constitutionally ordained forum for testing the majority support enjoyed by a government. This was reiterated in the *Rameshwar Prasad* case (2006).

The use of discretionary powers by the Governors has been subject to various court pronouncements. Nevertheless, judicial differences in interpretation resulted in inconsistent application of these principles.

The recent Justice Kurian Joseph Committee report on Union-State relations, constituted by the earlier Tamil Nadu government, recommended incorporating a new schedule into the Constitution to codify the rules governing the Governor's use of discretionary powers. This may be considered to provide a constitutional basis for the use of such discretionary powers. It is imperative that the Governors exercise their discretionary powers in a bona fide manner.

(Rangarajan R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. He currently trains civil-service aspirants at 'Officers IAS Academy'. Views expressed are personal)

THE GIST

▼ The Constitution allows the Governor to exercise discretion in appointing a Chief Minister in a hung Assembly, but differing interpretations and past instances have raised concerns over the impartial use of these discretionary powers.

▼ The Supreme Court has held that the "floor of the House" is the constitutionally ordained forum to test majority support, while the Justice Kurian Joseph Committee recommended codifying rules relating to the Governor's discretionary powers.

1. Constitutional Mandate: Article 164(1)

Article 164(1) states: "The Chief Minister shall be appointed by the Governor and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Chief Minister."

- **The Convention:** Usually, this is a formal duty where the leader of the majority party is invited.
- **The Reality:** The Constitution does not define the criteria for this appointment. This silence creates a "constitutional vacuum" in the event of a **Hung Assembly** (where no single party crosses the 50% mark), giving rise to the Governor's **discretionary powers**.

2. Discretionary Powers: When and Why?

The Governor exercises discretion specifically when the mandate is fractured. The objective is to appoint a government that is **stable** and can command a majority on the floor of the House.

However, the lack of a codified "manual" has led to inconsistent practices. To provide clarity, two major commissions laid down an **Order of Preference**:

Rank	Order of Preference (Sarkaria & Punchhi Commissions)
1	Pre-poll Alliance: A coalition formed before the elections that collectively holds a majority.
2	Single Largest Party (SLP): The party with the most seats, staking a claim with the support of others.
3	Post-electoral Coalition: All partners join the government.
4	Post-electoral Alliance: Some partners join the government, others support from outside.

3. Concerns: The "Agent of the Centre" Syndrome

The primary concern in Indian polity is the perceived **partisanship** of the Governor's office. Critics argue that Governors often bypass the recommended order of preference to favor the party in power at the Union level.

- **Inconsistent Precedents:**
 - In **Goa and Manipur (2017)**, the SLP (Congress) was ignored in favor of a BJP-led post-poll alliance.
 - In **Karnataka (2018)**, the SLP (BJP) was invited first, despite a post-poll alliance (Congress-JD(S)) claiming a majority.
- **The Result:** Such inconsistencies lead to "Horse Trading" (resort politics) and legal battles, undermining the democratic mandate.

4. Judicial Safeguards and the Way Forward

To curb the misuse of discretion, the Judiciary has stepped in with landmark rulings:

- **S.R. Bommai Case (1994):** The Supreme Court ruled that the **"Floor of the House"** is the only place to test a majority, not the Governor's subjective satisfaction or private parleys.
- **Rameshwar Prasad Case (2006):** Reaffirmed that the Governor cannot shut out a post-poll alliance if they can provide a stable government.

- **Justice Kurian Joseph Committee Recommendation:** A recent proposal to **codify these discretionary powers** into a new **Schedule of the Constitution**. This would transform "conventions" into "binding rules," ensuring the Governor acts in a bona fide (good faith) manner.

Conclusion

The Governor is meant to be a bridge between the Union and the State, acting as a "sagacious counselor." The current situation in Tamil Nadu highlights that while the Governor has the right to validate the majority of a post-poll alliance, the ultimate arbiter remains the Legislative Assembly. Moving from an individual-driven discretion to a rule-based constitutionalism is essential to protect the sanctity of the "Floor Test."

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: The principle that the majority of a government must be tested on the "Floor of the House" was strongly emphasized in:

- (a) Kesavananda Bharati Case
- (b) S.R. Bommai Case
- (c) Golaknath Case
- (d) Minerva Mills Case

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: "The office of the Governor has increasingly become the focal point of Centre–State tensions." Critically examine in the context of government formation in Hung Assemblies. **(250 Words)**

Delhi and the NCR are currently in the grip of a "heat re-trap," a phenomenon where the city's concrete fabric fails to cool down even at night. As temperatures regularly cross **40–45°C** in early 2026, a shift from emergency response to long-term structural resilience is imperative.

What measures are needed to address Delhi's heat crisis?

What structural changes are required to reduce extreme heat? How can urban planning help?

Suksham Tanu
Amir Hyder Khan

The story so far:

Delhi and the NCR are facing longer and more intense heatwaves, with the city increasingly retaining heat even at night. Rapid urbanisation, concrete-heavy infrastructure, air conditioning, and shrinking green cover have turned the Urban Heat Island Effect into a deeper "heat re-trap".

Why is Delhi retaining heat?

This transformation is rooted in the city's material logic. Concrete, asphalt, steel, and glass dominate Delhi NCR's expansion. These materials absorb heat efficiently but release it slowly.

Roads, rooftops, and facades accumulate heat through the day and emit it at night, delaying cooling. Surface temperatures in dense areas reach 50-60°C on peak afternoons. These surfaces act as reservoirs, keeping the surrounding air warm well into the night. The city, in effect, stores the sun.

Glass-heavy architecture in areas such as Gurgaon and Noida worsens the problem by allowing solar radiation indoors, increasing reliance on air conditioning rather than reducing heat.

Vehicular activity adds constant thermal input. Corridors like NH-48 function as continuous heat sources, where engines and exhaust combine with heat-absorbing asphalt to create persistent hotspots. Over time, these form into thermal corridors that reshape the city's microclimate.

At the same time, Delhi struggles to release heat. High-density construction and narrow streets restrict airflow, while traditional cooling features – courtyards, shaded pathways, ventilation corridors – have largely disappeared. As a result, air stagnates and heat accumulates within the city's form.

How does cooling contribute to warming?

While interiors are cooled, heat is expelled outdoors. In dense neighbourhoods, this raises ambient temperatures by 1-2°C.

This produces a feedback loop: rising temperatures increase the demand for cooling, which in turn releases more heat outside. The city cools itself internally while warming externally.

The energy burden is also significant. Delhi's peak electricity demand has crossed 8,000 MW during the summer, with cooling accounting for a significant share. Nationally, cooling demand is projected to grow nearly eightfold by 2050, increasing pressure on power systems and raising the risk of outages during extreme heat.

How is heat affecting the economy and ecology?

Factories and warehouses operate within specific temperature limits; excessive heat reduces efficiency and affects machinery. Productivity declines by 2-3% for every degree rise above optimal levels, leading to delays and higher costs.

Supply chains are also slowing as transport hours shrink and storage conditions deteriorate.

At a broader level, India loses over \$100 billion annually due to the decline in

heat-related productivity.

Ecologically, the city has lost natural cooling systems. Shrinking green cover, degraded wetlands, and the loss of the Yamuna floodplains have reduced evapotranspiration. Without vegetation and water bodies, Delhi's ability to regulate temperature has weakened.

What measures are needed to address the crisis?

Addressing this crisis requires structural change in how cities are built and managed. Materials must shift toward high-albedo surfaces, cool roofs, and reflective coatings. Buildings need insulation and passive design strategies like shading and cross-ventilation.

Urban planning must restore airflow through ventilation corridors and better street orientation. Green and blue infrastructure – including urban forests, parks, and water bodies – must expand as essential cooling systems.

Reducing heat generated by human activity is equally important. Sustainable transport, electric mobility, and improved public transit can lower vehicular emissions. Energy-efficient appliances and district cooling systems can reduce heat discharge.

Equally critical is social protection. Affordable housing upgrades, subsidised cooling, and community cooling centres are necessary to protect vulnerable populations during extreme heat. *(Suksham Tanu is a sustainability and environmental studies enthusiast based in Dubai; Amir Hyder Khan is a final-year B.Arch student at Jamia Millia Islamia)*

THE GIST

Delhi and the NCR are increasingly retaining heat, with concrete, asphalt, steel, and glass turning the Urban Heat Island Effect into a deeper "heat re-trap".

Addressing the heat crisis requires structural changes such as cool roofs, passive cooling strategies, ventilation corridors, green and blue infrastructure, and social protection measures.

1. Structural & Material Shifts

The "material logic" of Delhi—heavy on concrete, steel, and glass—must be recalibrated to reduce heat absorption.

- **Cool Roof Policy 2026:** Implementation of reflective (high-albedo) coatings and white roofs.
 - Impact: Reflective coatings at hubs like **Kashmere Gate ISBT** have already demonstrated significant indoor temperature reductions.
- **Built-Environment Upgrades:** Moving away from glass-heavy facades (prevalent in Gurgaon/Noida) which trap solar radiation. Buildings require better **thermal insulation** and passive design strategies like traditional **shading** and **cross-ventilation**.
- **Pavement Modification:** Transitioning from black asphalt to permeable, light-colored paving materials for roads and sidewalks to reduce the surface temperature of "thermal corridors" like **NH-48**.

2. Urban Planning & Design

Urban planning must pivot to restore the city's natural ability to "breathe" and shed heat.

- **Ventilation Corridors:** Designing high-density areas with specific street orientations that allow wind flow, preventing the stagnation of hot air in narrow lanes.
- **Blue-Green Infrastructure:**
 - **Urban Forests:** Prioritizing native, drought-resistant species (e.g., in the Central Ridge) which cool the air through evapotranspiration.
 - **Wetland Restoration:** Rejuvenating the Yamuna floodplains and local water bodies to act as "heat sinks."
- **District Cooling Systems:** Instead of individual AC units that vent heat into neighbors' windows, centralized "district cooling" can reduce the overall outdoor ambient temperature by **1–2°C**.

3. Immediate Policy & Social Protection

As of April/May 2026, the **Delhi Heatwave Action Plan** has operationalized several "heat-shield" measures:

- **Labor Protections:** A mandatory **construction ban** between 12:00 PM and 3:00 PM during severe heatwaves, as mandated under the Disaster Management Act.
- **Medical Preparedness:** Establishment of "cool rooms" in 30+ hospitals and alerting 339 health centers to manage heat-related illnesses like heatstroke.
- **Public Cooling Infrastructure:** Installation of high-pressure **misting systems** at bus stops and "cool kiosks" for outdoor workers.

4. Economic & Ecological Resilience

The heat crisis is no longer just a health issue; it is a major economic drain.

- **Productivity Protection:** India is projected to lose nearly **6% of working hours** by 2030 due to heat. Policy shifts toward "shift-work" (early morning/late evening) are necessary for the 94 crore informal workers.
- **Sustainable Mobility:** Accelerating the shift to **Electric Vehicles (EVs)** to eliminate the massive "tailpipe heat" generated by internal combustion engines in traffic hotspots.

Conclusion

Addressing Delhi's heat crisis requires moving beyond "emergency ORS distribution" to a fundamental redesign of the city. By integrating the **India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP)** with local **Cool Roof Policies** and nature-based solutions, Delhi can break the feedback loop of internal cooling leading to external warming. The goal is to transform Delhi from a "reservoir of sun" back into a livable urban ecosystem.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: The term "Urban Heat Island (UHI)" refers to:

- (a) Heat generated only by industries in urban areas
- (b) Urban areas experiencing significantly higher temperatures than surrounding rural areas
- (c) Heatwaves occurring near coastal islands
- (d) Increase in ocean temperature due to global warming

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques:Heatwaves are no longer seasonal weather events but a structural developmental challenge for India. Analyze.(150 Words)



Advancing India-South Korea defence innovation ties

Since establishing diplomatic relations in 1973, India and South Korea have maintained defence ties. Their first formal agreement, the 2005 MoU on Defence Industry and Logistics, promoted cooperation in production, research and development, and procurement. Subsequently, they signed separate five-year memoranda of understanding on defence cooperation and defence research and development (R&D) in 2010.

The first enabled exchanges of expertise, training, visits and joint exercises, while the second focused on emerging technologies such as marine, electronics, and intelligent systems through links between India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the South Korean defence industry. In 2015, the partnership was elevated to a Special Strategic Partnership.

Furthermore, the 2020 Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation expanded engagements into key areas, such as land, naval, aero, and guided weapon systems, along with investments and technology transfer in India's defence industrial corridors. A notable outcome of this partnership is the K9 Vajra-T self-propelled artillery system, manufactured in India by Larsen & Toubro (L&T) and Hanwha Aerospace, South Korea under the 'Make in India' initiative, whose success led to a follow-on production contract.

The new platform

On April 20, 2026, at the India-South Korea Summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Lee Jae Myung, a new defence innovation platform called the Korea-India Defence Accelerator (KIND-X) was announced.

As part of the Joint Strategic Vision, KIND-X aims to connect businesses, incubators, investors, defence start-ups, and universities from both sides. KIND-X is not a new model of cooperation for India.

It mirrors similar defence industrial innovation bridges with the United States under INDUS-X (India-U.S. Defense Acceleration Ecosystem) and with France under FRIND-X (France-India Defence Startup Excellence). There have also



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KIND-X can help deepen bilateral defence research and development, co-production, and start-up collaboration

been suggestions to create an INDUS-X-like model with South Korea. Drawing on these existing models, KIND-X is expected to be led by South Korea's Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) and India's Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO). Both countries run defence innovation programmes to strengthen their defence start-up ecosystems, such as South Korea's specialised innovation enterprise system and India's Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX).

According to India's Ministry of External Affairs special briefing on April 20, 2024, KIND-X is expected to align with the 2020 Roadmap for Defence Industries Cooperation.

What can be unlocked

What can KIND-X unlock? KIND-X can emerge as the "defence innovation bridge", expanding defence R&D, innovation, co-development and co-production, involving startups, investors, universities, academia, and think tanks, essentially creating a joint defence innovation and industrial ecosystem from both countries. This may involve release of joint challenges and grants by DAPA and DIO for their respective startups to innovate defence technologies in the areas envisaged under the 2020 road map.

It may facilitate access to testing facilities through universities and laboratories in both countries, promote joint certification and standardisation processes, and support accelerator and incubator programmes connecting investors and innovators from both sides. It may also include workshops to help stakeholders navigate each other's markets and production systems. These workshops can address export control regimes, funding models for defence production, and intellectual property and licensing requirements related to technology transfer for co-production and co-development.

An annual summit, similar to the INDUS-X summit, could convene high-level representatives from defence ministries, industry, universities, think tanks, and academia in Seoul, New Delhi, and other industrial hubs. The KIND-X summit could also convene Track 1.5 dialogues to

emphasise the strategic rationale for bilateral defence cooperation, foster networking, and periodically assess progress on deliverables under the initiative.

The success of KIND-X will depend on leveraging existing co-production ventures such as the K9 Vajra-T howitzers by L&T and Hanwha Aerospace to create templates for future defence projects. It will connect South Korea's innovation clusters in Changwon, Daejeon, and Gumi with India's defence corridors in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh, and with aerospace hubs in Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad. Involving major firms such as Hyundai, L&T, Tata Advanced Systems Limited, Mahindra, Bharat Forge, Hanwha, LIG, and Kangnam, alongside start-ups and R&D ecosystems, can further expand linkages.

As an innovation bridge

The launch of KIND-X as a defence innovation bridge signals both governments' keenness to unlock their respective deep-tech innovation ecosystems to develop dual-use technologies. With deepening ties across other strategic sectors such as shipbuilding, artificial intelligence, space, critical minerals, and semiconductors, KIND-X can complement and draw on convergences in these sectors for defence.

Aligning with India's Defence Forces Vision 2047 and South Korea's Defence Innovation 4.0 strategy, and co-investing in emerging and future technologies will be key to making this initiative forward-looking. Potential areas under KIND-X include Artificial Intelligence platforms for military applications, autonomous weapon systems and robotics, joint development of satellites for space-based intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), Space Situational Awareness (SSA), communication and navigation, critical mineral supply chains, and defence semiconductor fabs. Given both countries' growing defence exports, KIND-X can emerge as an important facilitator.

The onus is now upon both defence ministries to curate tangible deliverables under KIND-X, clarifying its steering template, funding mechanisms and areas of joint innovation.

GS PaperII: International Relations

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question: India-South Korea relations are evolving from economic cooperation to strategic technological partnership. Discuss in the context of the KIND-X initiative. (250 Words)

Context : The launch of the Korea-India Defence Accelerator (KIND-X) on April 20, 2026, during the summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Lee Jae Myung, marks a paradigm shift in bilateral relations. Moving beyond traditional "buyer-seller" dynamics, India and South Korea are now institutionalizing a "Defence Innovation Bridge" aimed at co-development and deep-tech integration.

1. What is KIND-X?

KIND-X is a strategic platform designed to connect the defense ecosystems of both nations—including startups, universities, investors, and established industry giants.

- **Institutional Anchors:** It is led by South Korea's **Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA)** and India's **Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO)**.
- **The "Innovation Bridge" Model:** It mirrors successful existing frameworks like **INDUS-X** (with the US) and **FRIND-X** (with France), creating a specialized corridor for defense startups.
- **Synergy of Programs:** It aligns South Korea's specialized innovation enterprise system with India's **Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX)**.

2. Strategic Objectives and "Unlocking" Potential

KIND-X is designed to move past the successful co-production of hardware (like the **K9 Vajra-T** howitzers) into the realm of intangible intellectual property and high-end technology.

Feature	Description
Joint Challenges	DAPA and DIO will release joint grants for startups to solve specific military problems.
Market Navigation	Workshops to help stakeholders understand export controls, funding models, and Intellectual Property (IP) licensing.
Testing Standards &	Mutual access to laboratories and universities to promote joint certification and standardization.
Track Dialogues 1.5	Annual summits involving officials and think tanks to assess progress and refine the strategic rationale.

3. Key Technological Frontiers

The initiative focuses on **Dual-Use Technologies** and aligns with India's **Defence Forces Vision 2047** and South Korea's **Defence Innovation 4.0**.

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI):** AI platforms for military applications and decision-making.
- **Autonomous Systems:** Development of robotics and unmanned weapon systems.
- **Space & Intelligence:** Joint development of satellites for **ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance)** and **Space Situational Awareness (SSA)**.
- **Critical Components:** Securing supply chains for critical minerals and establishing **defence semiconductor fabs**.

4. Geographic and Industrial Linkages

KIND-X aims to create a physical and digital map of cooperation by linking specific industrial clusters:

- **South Korea:** Changwon, Daejeon, and Gumi.
- **India:** Defence Industrial Corridors in **Tamil Nadu** and **Uttar Pradesh**, and aerospace hubs in **Bengaluru, Chennai, and Hyderabad**.
- **Major Players:** Integration of firms like Hanwha, LIG, and Hyundai with Indian giants like **L&T, Tata Advanced Systems, and Mahindra**.

5. Challenges and Way Forward

The success of KIND-X will depend on three critical factors:

1. **Funding Mechanisms:** Establishing clear, joint-investment pools for high-risk defense startups.
2. **Tech Transfer:** Navigating the complexities of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in co-developed products.
3. **Tangible Deliverables:** Moving quickly from MoUs to actual prototypes and battlefield-ready equipment.

Conclusion

KIND-X transforms the India-South Korea "Special Strategic Partnership" into a future-ready technological alliance. By leveraging their respective strengths—India's massive market and software prowess with South Korea's advanced manufacturing and hardware innovation—both nations are positioning themselves as major exporters of 21st-century defense technology. This "Innovation Bridge" ensures that the partnership remains resilient against shifting global geopolitics while securing technological sovereignty.

