

The Hindu Important News Articles For UPSC CSE

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Page 01 : GS II : International Relations / Preliminary Examination

Recently, during the 11th Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting, **India and the US** have signed a bilateral agreement to secure the supply of Rare Earth Elements (REEs) and Critical Minerals. Along with this, the four Quad countries (India, the US, Australia and Japan) have also approved a joint mineral framework. The move comes with the aim of securing and diversifying the global supply chain in response to the recent export restrictions of strategic metals imposed by China.

Key Points and Analysis

We can understand the various aspects of this agreement under the following key points:

A. Main Objectives and Scope of the Agreement

- **Scope of Bilateral Cooperation:** This framework of India-US will increase cooperation in mining, processing, recycling and related investments.
- **Scrap Management and Financing:** Both countries will promote financial synergy for effective management and processing of scrap of rare earth minerals.

B. Geopolitical Context and the 'China Factor'

- **China's Monopoly:** China has a near monopoly on the mining of rare earth elements (REEs) globally and in particular their processing.
- **Weapon of Export Control:** In response to the tariffs imposed by the US in 2025, China had imposed stringent export controls on these strategic metals. Since these metals are indispensable for semiconductors, electric vehicles (EVs), defense equipment, and modern electronics, China's move had created a crisis in the global market. This move by the Quad is to reduce this dependence.

C. Financial Resources and Other Initiatives

- **The Quad's \$20 billion fund:** Together, the four Quad countries have set a goal of raising nearly \$20 billion in government and private sector collaboration to establish stable supply chains.
- **U.S. Contribution:** According to the U.S. Embassy, the U.S. is mobilizing resources through more than \$30 billion in investments, loans, and letters of intent in partnership with the private sector.

India, U.S. draw up deal on rare earth elements

Framework follows growing concerns over China's export controls of strategic metals; Australia, Japan join fellow Quad members in separate framework among the grouping on critical minerals

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Rare deal
The framework comes amid shortfall of critical metals in global markets after China imposed export curbs on rare earth elements



Framework seeks to:

- Deepen India-U.S. cooperation across the critical minerals and rare earths supply chain, including mining, processing, recycling and related investments
- Implement effective management of critical minerals and rare earths scrap
- Strengthen resilient and diversified supply chains
- Promote collaboration in financing

Mining strategy: The agreement follows continued India-U.S. engagements, including India becoming a signatory to the U.S.-led Pax Silica initiative. REUTERS

so signed among the four Quad nations – Australia, India, Japan, and the United States – which aims at mobilising around \$20 billion in government and private-sector support to establish stable supply chains for critical minerals.

The initiatives aim at dealing with the shortfall of critical metals in global markets that intensified after China imposed export controls on rare earth elements in 2025, after the U.S.'s imposition of tariffs on a large number of partner countries.

'\$30-billion projects'
The India-U.S. deal was built upon continued engagements between the two countries, including India becoming a signatory to the U.S.-led Pax Silica initiative on February 20, 2026.

A statement issued by the U.S. Embassy said the United States is "mobilising unprecedented resources to secure critical supply chains, supporting projects with more than \$30 billion in letters of interest, investments, loans and other support in partnership with the private sector".

"These coordinated efforts span domestic and international projects, strengthening U.S. national security and economic competitiveness," the statement said.

The Quad Critical Minerals Initiative Framework will help in nurturing projects on critical minerals that are located in 'Quad partner countries' and are 'operated by companies headquartered in Quad partner countries', thereby plugging supply chain

gaps in critical minerals.

Both the India-U.S. and Quad-level frameworks are expected to allow for greater alignment and harmonisation of domestic laws and regulations to facilitate easier access to the supply chain. These agreements are also expected to help partner countries to tighten controls to deal with national security requirements.

"Quad partners intend to work together to improve the recovery and use of critical minerals from e-waste and other scrap materials to enhance the supply chain and promote recycling of contained critical minerals within Quad partner and like-minded countries," said a statement.

EDITORIAL
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- **Pax Silica Initiative:** The agreement is a sequel to India's accession to the US-led 'Pax Silica' initiative on February 20, 2026, which strengthens technical and mineral security.

D. Strategic and Legal Alignment

- **Simplification of Domestic Laws:** Under this agreement, the participating countries will harmonize their domestic laws and regulations to facilitate the movement and trade of minerals.
- **E-Waste and Recycling:** The Quad countries will collaborate on technical cooperation to extract critical minerals from e-waste and other scrap materials and reuse them, ensuring environmental protection as well as mineral security.

3. Significance for India

- **Self-reliance and Security:** India is solely dependent on imported critical minerals for its 'Make in India', EV mission, and semiconductor mission. This agreement will provide a safe supply route to India.
- **Technology Transfer:** Countries like the US and Japan will help India acquire cutting-edge technology in the field of processing and recycling.
- **Global Manufacturing Hub:** Reducing dependence on China will enable India to position itself as a secure and reliable global manufacturing hub.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this mineral agreement between the India-US and the Quad countries is not just a trade deal, but it is a far-reaching strategic move. The agreement strengthens the 'China Plus One' (China+1) strategy and will be a milestone in reducing the geopolitical influence of any one country on future clean energy and defence technologies. This is a great opportunity for India to consolidate both its economic sovereignty and national security.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Q: What does 'China+1 Strategy' stand for?

- (a) Joint military strategy between China and India
- (b) Termination of trade with China
- (c) Developing alternative manufacturing hubs by reducing dependence on China by global companies
- (d) Construction of new trade corridors by China

Answer: d)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Q: How has China's control of rare earth elements affected the global supply chain? Analyse the challenges and opportunities it poses for India. **(150 words)**

Page 01 & 4 : GS II : International Relations / Preliminary Examination

Recently, the 11th Quad **Foreign Ministers' Meeting** was held in New Delhi. The meeting assumed significance amid the ongoing crisis in West Asia, especially tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, and escalating military activities in the South China Sea. In this meeting, India, the US, Australia and Japan have announced new strategic initiatives to maintain security, stability and energy supply in the Indo-Pacific region.

Key Analysis Points

1. Maritime Security and Surveillance Initiatives

The meeting announced two major initiatives to enhance security and transparency in the Indo-Pacific region:

- **Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Cooperation Initiative:** Under this, the four countries will share intelligence using their respective maritime surveillance capabilities.
- **Expansion of the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA) Initiative:** Through this, regional countries will be provided with data on the movement of commercial maritime vessels in real-time, helping in emergency and humanitarian assistance operations.

2. The Strait of Hormuz Crisis and International Law

- **Iran's Claim vs. Quad's Stand:** Iran believes that the Strait of Hormuz is not an international waterway, **so it is not obligated to abide by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)**. In contrast, the Quad countries have rejected this claim, emphasizing the **importance of freedom of navigation** and the safety of commercial vessels.
- **Coordination of Coast Guards:** India will host **the next 'Quad at Sea' operation**, which will bring the Coast Guards of the four countries on one platform.

3. Regional energy security

- The ongoing conflicts in the Red Sea and Hormuz threaten to disrupt global energy supply chains. To address this, **the 'Quad Indo-Pacific Energy Security Initiative'** has been **launched** to meet the energy crisis in emergency situations.

Quad announces maritime plans amid Hormuz crisis

Kallol Bhattacharjee
NEW DELHI

Responding to the challenges emanating from the conflict-hit Persian Gulf and the tensions in the South China Sea, the Quad grouping on Tuesday pledged to enhance cooperation in the maritime and energy domains.

At the 11th Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM), External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and his counterparts from Australia, Japan, and the United States launched initiatives on energy security, as well as on maritime surveillance and domain awareness to aid in emergency operations and humanitarian responses at sea.

"On the issue of maritime security, there are two big announcements. The first is the launch of the Indo-Pacific Maritime Surveillance Collaboration initiative, which is going to leverage each of our country's maritime surveillance capabilities in the Indo-Pacific to enhance information sharing," U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said at a press conference on the lawns of Hyderabad House, where he was joined by Mr. Jaishankar, Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi, and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong.

Freedom of navigation
The second, he said, is the "expansion of the Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness initiative which can provide near real-time commercial maritime domain awareness data to countries throughout the Indo-Pacific region".
The immediate context



Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar with visiting Quad Foreign Ministers after the meeting on Tuesday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

of these two initiatives found prominent mention in the joint statement issued at the end of the meeting, which insisted on freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz and the South China Sea.

Mr. Rubio also announced that India will host the "next iteration of the Quad at Sea mission, which will bring together our respective Coast Guards in one place and one ship".

Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi had said, while visiting New Delhi earlier this month, that the Strait of Hormuz is not part of any international waterway and as a result, Iran has no obligation to comply with the UNCLOS (UN Convention on the Law of the Sea).

The Quad joint statement contradicted the Iranian claim, and condemned attacks on commercial shipping vessels. It called for adherence to the UNCLOS in both the Strait of Hormuz and also the Red Sea where the Iran-backed Houthi militia continues to pose a threat to western shipping, especially against the backdrop

of the U.S.-Israel military campaign against Iran that started on February 28.

The grouping also announced the Quad Initiative on Indo-Pacific Energy Security to boost regional energy resilience and emergency response exercises.

Maritime commerce

Mr. Jaishankar also hinted at concerns over the continuing chokehold in the Strait of Hormuz and emphasised the need for "safe and unimpeded maritime commerce". Referring to the growing collaboration in areas such as surveillance and domain awareness, logistics networks, and undersea cables, he said, "We will be continuing to deepen these areas in the times to come."

Officials clarified that these initiatives were not aimed at any other regional powers. Later in the day, however, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, in an address, reiterated China's opposition to the "creation of exclusive small cliques".

QUESTIONS ON FUTURE
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4. Questions and challenges on the future of the Quad

- **Uncertainty of the summit:** The lack of a date for the next Quad Heads of Government Summit to be held in India is a matter of concern. This has led to fears that the group may be reduced from the top level to only foreign minister-level talks.
- **Global Equation:** Analysts are questioning the US commitment to the Quad due to America's changing political leadership and its bilateral relations with other global powers, although the US leadership has denied it.
- **China's Opposition:** China has criticized the meeting as usual, calling it an attempt to create a "specific and narrow bloc".

conclusion

The steps taken by the Quad countries for maritime cooperation and energy security reflect that the group is emerging as a significant security provider in the Indo-Pacific region. However, the delay in scheduling meetings at the level of top leaders and the difference in priorities among the member countries pose a major challenge to the future of this grouping. It is imperative for India to continue to use this platform to strengthen its maritime security and strengthen its position in the global supply chain.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Q:What is the main objective of the 'IPMDA' (Indo-Pacific Maritime Domain Awareness) initiative?

- (a) Monitoring of nuclear weapons in the Indo-Pacific region
- (b) Real-time monitoring and information sharing of marine vessels
- (c) Redrawing of maritime boundaries
- (d) Establishment of military bases in the Indian Ocean

Answer: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "The **Quad** is no longer just a strategic dialogue forum, but is emerging as a comprehensive maritime and energy security architecture in the Indo-Pacific region. Analyse with reference to the recent Foreign Ministers' Meeting. **(150 words)**

Recently, 7 out of 10 Rajya Sabha MPs of the Aam Aadmi Party have announced the merger with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). He has claimed that this number fulfills the condition of a two-thirds majority under the anti-defection law. This development is not only politically significant, but it has also raised deep constitutional questions about the interpretation of the provisions of 'merger' under the 10th Schedule of the Indian Constitution and the stability of legislative democracy.

Rajya Sabha defections, constitutional questions

The recent developments within the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), appear to have dealt a decisive blow to its representation in the Rajya Sabha. On April 24, 2026, seven out of its 10 sitting Members of Parliament, publicly announced that over two-thirds of the party's MPs had decided to merge with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), invoking the provisions of the 10th Schedule of the Constitution.

While the development has attracted widespread political attention, its implications extend beyond immediate partisan concerns. It raises significant constitutional questions regarding the interpretation of the anti-defection law, particularly the scope of the "merger" exception under the 10th Schedule. Nor is the episode entirely unprecedented. Similar assertions of legislative strength have been witnessed at the State level, most notably in the case of the Eknath Shinde-led faction in the Shiv Sena within the Maharashtra Assembly. However, the present instance assumes greater significance as it unfolds at the national level, involving MPs in the Rajya Sabha, thereby amplifying its constitutional and political consequences.

Anti-defection framework, 'split' doctrine
The Constitution, as originally adopted in 1950, provided for disqualification of MPs on limited grounds under Article 103, to be decided by the President of India acting on the opinion of the Election Commission of India. The 10th Schedule, introduced by the 52nd Constitution Amendment Act, 1985, expanded this framework to address the persistent problem of political defections adding another ground for disqualification of members to be decided by the Speaker or Chairman. The objective was to curb the practice of elected representatives abandoning their parties for political gain, by attaching the consequence of disqualification.

At the same time, the Schedule originally carved out two exceptions, "split" under Paragraph 3 and "merger" under Paragraph 4. The first, which recognised a split in a legislature party where one-third of its members formed a



Vanshaj Azad

Advocate, presently working as Law Clerk-cum-Research Associate at the Supreme Court of India

The recent episode involving the Aam Aadmi Party and the invocation of the provisions of the 10th Schedule highlights the need for judicial clarity

separate faction, was subsequently deleted by the 91st Constitution Amendment Act, 2003, following recommendations of Electoral Reforms (Dinesh Goswami Committee) in May 1990 and the 170th Law Commission Report, 1999. This deletion marked a conscious shift away from recognising internal fractures within legislature parties as a legitimate defence to defection.

The omission of Paragraph 3 carries deeper implications. The concept of "split" had implicitly recognised a degree of autonomy in the legislature party *vis-à-vis* the political party. Its removal signals Parliament's clear intent to restore primacy to the political party as the central unit of democratic accountability.

The Supreme Court of India has also reinforced this position in *Subhash Desai vs Principal Secretary, Governor of Maharashtra* (2023), where a Constitution Bench declined to interpret the 10th Schedule in a manner that severs the figurative umbilical cord between a legislature party and its parent political party. The Court underscored that the political party continues to guide and control the actions of its elected members, even after electoral victory.

The merger exception in question

The present controversy centres on the interpretation of Paragraph 4 of the 10th Schedule, which provides immunity from disqualification in cases of merger. The key question is whether such a merger can be effected solely by two-thirds of the members of a legislature party, or whether it must necessarily be preceded by, or reflect, a decision of the original political party itself.

A plain reading of Paragraph 4 suggests that the exemption applies where the "original political party" merges with another political party. The emphasis, therefore, is on the merger of the political party, not merely a numerical alignment within the legislature party. Hence, Paragraph 4(2), which introduces a deeming fiction based on the consent of two-thirds of legislators, cannot be read in isolation so as to displace the primacy of the political organisation.

To do so would invert the constitutional design, effectively allowing the legislature party to dictate the fate of the political party.

This interpretation would be inconsistent with Parliament's decision in exercise of constituent power to abolish the "split" exception, which had earlier permitted even a one-third faction to claim legitimacy. The threshold may have changed, but the principle remains that the internal dissent within the legislature party cannot override the identity and continuity of the political party.

Beyond technicalities

At a broader level, the anti-defection law was not merely intended to regulate individual conduct but to preserve the integrity of the party system and, by extension, the institution of 'opposition' in democracy. While it does not entirely prohibit political realignments, it subjects them to constitutional discipline.

The recent AAP episode underscores the need for judicial clarity on whether legislative majorities can, in effect, appropriate the identity of the political party they were elected to represent. The answer will have far-reaching implications for parliamentary democracy.

As lyricist and former parliamentarian Javed Akhtar once observed in the Rajya Sabha, the essential distinction between democracy and dictatorship lies in the presence of an opposition. It is this opposition that the 10th Schedule seeks to safeguard. AAP has approached the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha under Paragraph 6 of the 10th Schedule to challenge the action of its seven "merged" MPs.

How the merger exception is ultimately interpreted will be significant, particularly for the continued vitality of the Opposition. In the absence of settled judicial clarity, the issue is likely, sooner rather than later, to invite authoritative determination by the Supreme Court. The hope, ultimately, is that constitutional adjudication will preserve the centrality of political parties within India's parliamentary framework.

Key Analysis Points

1. Background and Evolution of Anti-Defection Law

- **52nd Constitutional Amendment (1985):** The original Constitution did not have a provision for disqualification on the grounds of defection. The 10th Schedule was added to prevent the unethical practice of repeated switches of party for political gains by elected representatives. Under this, the decision of disqualification was handed over to the Speaker or Chairman of the House.

- **Basic Exception:** Initially there were two exceptions to this law—'split' in the party under paragraph 3 and 'merger' under paragraph 4.
- **91st Constitutional Amendment (2003):** Based on the recommendations of the Dinesh Goswami Committee and the 170th Law Commission, the 'split' exception was completely abolished. The aim was to ensure that internal factionalism within the party could not be made a legitimate basis for defection.

2. The 'Original Political Party' vs the 'Legislature Party' Controversy

The main focus of this whole controversy is the interpretation of paragraph 4 of the 10th Schedule. The question is, is the mere concurrence of two-thirds of the MPs enough for a merger?

- **Supremacy of political party: A clear reading of** paragraph 4 of the law shows that exemption occurs when the 'original political party' is merged with another party. The strength of MPs or MLAs within the House alone cannot replace the decision of the parent organization.
- **Supreme Court's stand (Subhash Desai v. Maharashtra Governor case, 2023):** The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court had clarified that the relationship between a legislative party and its parent political party can never be broken. Even after being elected, members are bound by the control and instructions (whip) of their parent political party.

3. Beyond Technical Interpretation: Impact on Legislative Democracy

- **Existence of the Opposition:** The basic purpose of the anti-defection law was not only to control individual conduct but also to preserve the integrity of the party system and the role of the 'opposition' in democracy. If the legislative majority itself is allowed to usurp the identity of the original party, it will undermine the basic structure of parliamentary democracy.
- **Constitutional contradiction:** If the provision of 'split' has already been abolished by the Parliament, then recognising a merger made without the consent of the parent organization on the basis of a two-thirds majority only would be contrary to the basic spirit of the previous amendments.

4. Current Situation and Need for Judicial Clarity

The Aam Aadmi Party has filed a petition before the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha under paragraph 6 of the 10th Schedule to disqualify these 7 MPs. Since no final and complete judicial precedent has yet been established on the subject, the matter is likely to be finalized by the Supreme Court in the future.

conclusion

This case re-underlines the central role of political parties in the Indian parliamentary system. For the vibrancy of democracy, it is imperative to have a strong and stable opposition along with the ruling party. The interpretation of this 'merger' provision by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and eventually the Supreme Court will determine the future course of India's party politics and the effectiveness of the anti-defection law. The Constitution should be interpreted in such a way that it respects political integrity and the mandate of the people.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: Consider the following statements:

1. The 91st Constitutional Amendment abolished the separation exception.
2. Disqualification under the 10th Schedule is decided by the Election Commission.
3. **The** support of two-thirds of the legislative party has been considered necessary for the merger.

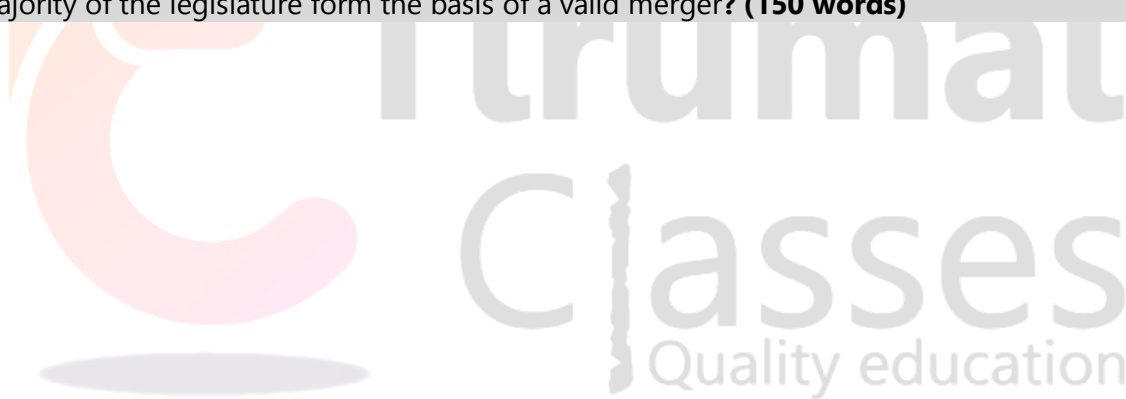
Which of the above statements is/are correct?

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

Answer: b)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: Explain the difference between 'Parent Political Party' and 'Legislature Party' in the 10th Schedule. Can only a two-thirds majority of the legislature form the basis of a valid merger? **(150 words)**



Page 09: GS II : Social Justice / Preliminary Examination

According to the recently released 'Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2024' (period 2022-2024), non-communicable diseases (NCDs) account for 60% of the total deaths in India. This figure represents a massive increase of 7.3% compared to the period 2015-2017 (52.8%). The report makes it clear that India is currently undergoing a major epidemiological transition, where chronic and lifestyle diseases are becoming the main cause of death rather than infectious diseases.

NCDs accounted for 60% of all deaths in 2022-2024

Non-communicable diseases are increasingly becoming the major cause of death even among women and the rural population

DATA POINT

Bindu Shajan Perappadan

India's youth mortality profile is shifting with Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) being the cause of 60% of all deaths in the 2022-2024 reporting period, according to the Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2024, released this month. This was an increase of 7.3 percentage points compared with the 2015-2017 reporting period. NCDs were the cause of 52.8% of all deaths (Chart 1).

Analysis showed that among the NCDs, cardiovascular diseases alone accounted for 32.1% of all deaths in 2022-2024, which is again an increase of five percentage points compared with 27.1% in 2015-2017. The combined share of communicable diseases, and maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions as the major cause of death in India has meanwhile come down from 22% in the 2015-2017 period to 19.7% in 2022-2024. Age-group-wise data presented in the Cause of Deaths in India: 2022-2024 report showed that while cardiovascular diseases accounted for 32.1% of all deaths caused by NCDs, they accounted for 37.3% in the 30-69 age group. Health experts note that heart-related illnesses are increasingly affecting adults in their 30s and 40s, which is a matter of concern as this age group forms a large part of the nation's workforce.

The findings assume significance as India is witnessing a decline in fertility rates. Several States are already below the replacement fertility level of 2.1 children per woman.

In the 2022-2024 reporting period, while 69.3% of deaths happened in the 55-plus age group, those aged between 30 and 44 accounted for 19.5% of deaths, making premature deaths among younger adults an economic and social concern.

Analysis of the data over the years showed notable differences between the rural and urban population and between men and women. NCDs were the cause of 64.8% of all deaths in urban areas while they accounted for only 58.8% of all deaths in rural areas. Similarly, NCDs accounted for 62.3% of all deaths among men and 56.9% among women. However, the trend of NCDs becoming the major cause of death is clearly visible even among the rural population and women (Chart 2).

After cardiovascular diseases, the top causes of death in the 2022-2024 reporting period included cancer and other neoplasms, respiratory diseases, digestive diseases and respiratory infections, each accounting for more than 5% of all deaths (Table 1).

The report suggests that India is now experiencing an epidemiological transition similar to that seen in many middle- and high-income countries, where chronic illnesses dominate mortality trends. At the same time, infectious diseases continue to remain a challenge, creating what public health experts describe as a "double burden" of disease.

Suicide remains the leading cause of death among the 15-29 age group (Table 1). Suicides accounted for 19% of deaths in this age group, compared with 16.3% in 2015-2017. The rise in suicides points to growing mental health pressures, including unemployment, academic stress, financial difficulties, and social isolation.

The report also showed stark differences between the group of eight States – Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand – which were identified for special focus for the Government under its Empowered Action Group (EAG) along with Assam and other States (Chart 3). In EAG States and Assam, NCDs accounted for 53.9% of all deaths compared with 63.5% for other States.

Cause for concern

The data for the charts were sourced from Sample Registration System – Statistical Reports and Causes of Deaths in India Reports. In the charts, EAG refers to empowered action group



CHART 1: Major causes for deaths in India over reporting periods from 2015-2017 onwards

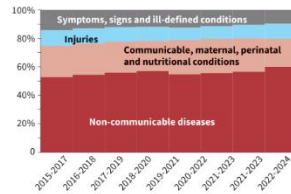


CHART 2: Share of deaths due to NCDs between rural and urban areas and men and women

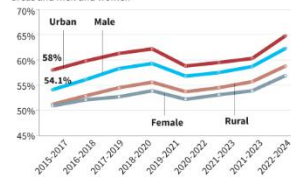


CHART 3: Share of deaths due to NCDs and communicable diseases between EAG States and Assam versus other States

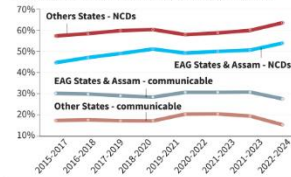


TABLE 1: Top 10 causes of deaths among all age groups, and in the 15-29 and 30-69 age groups in India

Cause	All ages (%)	Age 15-29 (%)	Age 30-69 (%)
Cardiovascular diseases	32.1	10.8	37.3
Cancer	7	4.2	10.3
Digestive diseases	5.9	7.5	8.9
Respiratory diseases	6	-	5.1
Respiratory infections	5.7	-	-
Diabetes mellitus	3.6	-	3.9
Genito-urinary diseases	3.4	-	4.7
Fever of unknown origin	4.1	3.3	-
Road accidents	-	17.7	4.2
Other unintentional injuries	4.1	8.6	3.9
Suicide	-	19	3.4
Tuberculosis	-	3.1	3.5
Neuro-psychiatric conditions	-	3	-
Ill-defined / other symptoms	9.7	3.2	-

The table above shows the top 10 causes of deaths among age categories. The blanks indicate that these causes were not among the top 10 causes for the corresponding age group. As shown in the table above, road accidents and suicides disproportionately affect younger people. Deaths caused by motor vehicle accidents increased from 2.9% to 3.2%, while suicides rose from 2.5% to 2.8% in the latest report. In Chart 1, the increase in deaths due to communicable diseases during 2019-2021 and 2020-2022 was due to COVID-19.

Key Analysis Points

1. Changes in Disease Profile and Major Diseases

- **Cardiovascular Diseases:** Cardiovascular diseases have proven to be the deadliest among non-communicable diseases, accounting for 32.1% of total deaths (up from 27.1% in 2015-17).
- **Other major causes:** Cancer, respiratory diseases, and digestive tract diseases are among the top causes of death after cardiovascular diseases, accounting for more than 5% of each.
- **Decline in Infectious Diseases:** In contrast, the share of deaths from communicable, maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions has decreased from 22% to 19.7%.

2. Demographic and Economic Concerns

- **Crisis on the workforce (30-69 age group):** 37.3% of the total deaths due to cardiovascular diseases have been seen in the age group of 30 to 69 years. The rising cases of heart disease and premature deaths among young people in their 30s and 40s are impacting the country's productive workforce, posing a serious economic and social challenge to India's demographic dividend.
- **Double Challenge with Decline in Fertility Rate:** The crisis comes at a time when the fertility rate in India is declining and many states have fallen below the replacement level of 2.1 children per woman.

3. Rural-Urban and Gender Discrepancies

- **Urban vs. Rural:** NCDs accounted for 64.8% of deaths in urban areas, compared to 58.8% in rural areas. Although it is less in rural areas, it is also seeing a rapid increase.
- **Men vs. Women:** Deaths from NCDs in men (62.3%) are higher than in women (56.9%), but it is now becoming the primary cause of death in both urban and rural populations.

4. Regional Inequality (EAG State vs. Others)

- The Empowered Working Group (EAG) states (e.g. Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand) and Assam recorded 53.9% of deaths due to NCDs, while the figure in other developed states was 63.5%. It was. This shows that the burden of infectious and nutritional diseases is still relatively high in the backward states, leaving India facing a **"double burden" on the health front.**

5. Youth Population and Mental Health Crisis

- **Suicide in the 15-29 age group:** Suicide remains the largest cause of death in this age group, accounting for 19% of the total deaths (it was 16.3% in 2015-17). It underscores the increasing mental stress, unemployment, academic pressure, financial difficulties, and social isolation among the youth.

Challenges and Policy Requirements

- **Strengthening of Primary Health Infrastructure:** India's health infrastructure has to adapt to the treatment of infectious diseases as well as for early detection, screening, and long-term management of NCDs now. The role of 'Health and Wellness Centres' (HWCs) under Ayushman Bharat becomes crucial here.
- **Lifestyle and Preventive Health:** There is a need to further intensify public awareness campaigns (such as the Fit India Movement) to improve diet, promote physical activity, and reduce tobacco and alcohol use.
- **Mental Health Support: Effective implementation of initiatives such as the** National Mental Health Programme and Tele-MANAS at the district and village level is essential to arrest the rising suicide rate among the youth.

Conclusion

The SRS Statistical Report 2024 is a sobering warning for India. This increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases is not only increasing the strain on the public health system but can also disrupt the country's economic growth. India needs a major strategic shift in its health policies, where prevention of lifestyle diseases, mental health support, and early screening at the primary level should be given top priority along with fighting infectious diseases.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: What is meant by 'epidemiological transition'?

- (a) Complete eradication of infectious diseases
- (b) Privatization of health services
- (c) Shifting of pattern of death and disease from infectious diseases to non-communicable diseases
- (d) Only increase in old age diseases

Answer: (c)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: The increasing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) in India has posed new challenges to the public health system. Discuss the context of **the SRS** Statistical Report 2024. (150 words)



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Recently, the Supreme Court has declared the right to safe travel on national highways as an integral part of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution, giving it the status of a fundamental right. [In re: Phalodi Accident vs. National Highways Authority of India (NHA) & Others (2025)] The court took suo motu cognizance and gave this historic decision. To pass this order, the Supreme Court has exercised its inherent powers under Article 142 of the Constitution, which gives it the extraordinary power to pass decrees or orders necessary to do 'complete justice' in any case.

The judiciary's role in complete justice

The Supreme Court is empowered under Article 142 to pass necessary orders to deliver complete justice where existing laws fail to provide a specific remedy. While this power acts as a 'constitutional safety valve', critics argue that it may lead to judicial encroachment upon the domain of the Executive or the Legislature

LETTER & SPIRIT

C.B.P. Srivastava

Another milestone in the direction of delivery of complete justice by the Supreme Court of India is its recent decision to elevate the Right to safe travel on National Highways as a fundamental right, declaring it an integral part of the Right to Life under Article 21 of the Constitution. The Court took suo motu cognizance of two road accidents in November 2025, which led to a loss of 34 lives and has issued wide-ranging directives. [In Re: Phalodi Accident vs. National Highways Authority of India and Others (2025)]. The Court has clearly held that safe, well-maintained, and motorable roads are no longer just a policy goal, but a constitutional obligation of the state. It is an alarming fact that while National Highways comprise only 2% of roads, they account for 30% of fatalities. In 2025, National Highways in India saw approximately 26,770 deaths in the first six months alone. The government aims to reduce road accidents by 50% by 2030 and to achieve this goal, it has adopted a strategy focusing on strengthening Education, Engineering (roads/vehicles), Enforcement, and Emergency Medical Service has been adopted. Despite fatalities on the National Highways decreasing by 11% compared to 2024, they still remain alarmingly high. These figures must have been a contributing factor in the Supreme Court's decision while exercising its inherent power under Article 142 of the Constitution which talks about complete justice.

Inherent power of the Supreme Court
The Supreme Court is the custodian of the Constitution. Hence, it has been given such powers which could be exercised where the law is silent or is found incapable of grievance redressal. Such powers are not conferred by statute but



The power to deliver complete justice is residuary in nature. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

are inherent to its role as the highest court, enabling it to go beyond strict procedural constraints to prevent injustice or abuse of process. Another condition to invoke Article 142 is a manifest error and non-exercise of it might lead to travesty of justice. The Supreme Court in *Delhi Judicial Service Association vs. State of Gujarat* (1991) has held that the power to do complete justice is entirely of different level and of a different quality. The Court further says that any restrictions contained in ordinary laws cannot act as limitation on the constitutional power of the Court.

The concept of complete justice
A pertinent question that comes to our mind is whether justice could ever be incomplete. If not, then why has the term 'complete justice' been incorporated into Clause (1) of Article 142 of the Constitution? Another question that may arise is whether High Courts may also deliver complete justice.
The power to deliver complete justice is residuary in nature and it may be exercised to ensure the observance of due

process of law. This is an extraordinary jurisdiction implicitly vested with trust and faith that it shall be exercised by applying the principle of natural justice, i.e., fairness. The Court also recognises its significance, and therefore, held in *Hitesh Bhatnagar vs. Deepa Bhatnagar* (2011) that extraordinary care and caution shall be observed while exercising this jurisdiction.

Article 142 empowers the Supreme Court to pass any necessary order to deliver comprehensive, equitable justice, even if existing laws or procedural technicalities do not provide a specific remedy. This power acts as a "constitutional safety valve" to fill legal gaps. It is a well-established fact that the Constitution of India gives precedence to natural justice over other forms of justice. In a landmark judgment, the apex court, in *Canara Bank vs. Debasis Das* (2003), says that the Constitution intends to deliver substantive justice, which is the removal of injustices and it shall be delivered either by way of legal or natural justice. In a situation where legal justice is incapable of doing so, the principles of

natural justice must be followed.

Complete justice and High Courts
The question of whether High Courts could also deliver complete justice may be answered on the basis of the Supreme Court's decision in *Anil Kumar Jain vs. Maya Jain* (2009) in which the Court held that the powers of High Courts under Article 226 of the Constitution are certainly not at par with those of the Supreme Court under Article 142. However, justice is a wide concept and shall always be complete. Thus, the High Courts may also deliver complete justice, though in a more circumscribed manner than the Supreme Court, whose inherent powers under Article 142 serve as one of the tools for applying the concept of due process of law in rapidly changing social, economic, political and value systems within and outside India.

Cause for controversy
The exercise of Article 142 is often criticised as judicial overreach that undermines the principle of separation of powers. Critics point out that the Court bypasses the established laws and procedures and may encroach upon the domain of the Executive or the Legislature. However, such criticisms do not have much rationale. It is true that invoking Article 142 makes the judiciary more active. However, judicial activism involves the proactive and progressive interpretation of laws or constitutional provisions. Its constitutional intent is to deliver justice, be it social, economic, political or legal. The problem arises when new and evolving social realities, such as live-in relationships or matters relating to homosexuality, emerge and established laws and procedures may prove inadequate to deliver justice. In such situations the Supreme Court, as the custodian of the Constitution needs to proactively take steps to ensure that complete justice is delivered.
(C.B.P. Srivastava is President, Centre for Applied Research in Governance, Delhi)

THE GIST

▼ The Supreme Court of India, as the custodian of the Constitution, has been given such powers which could be exercised where the law is silent or is found incapable of grievance redressal.

▼ The Court's power to deliver complete justice is residuary in nature, and it may be exercised to ensure the observance of due process of law. It is an extraordinary jurisdiction implicitly vested with trust and faith that it shall be exercised by applying the principle of natural justice.

Key Analysis Points

1. National Highways and the Right to Safe Travel (Article 21)

- **Constitutional Obligation:** The Court has clarified that safe and well-maintained roads are no longer just a policy goal of the state, but it is a constitutional obligation of the state.

- **Factual Background:** National highways in India account for only 2% of the total road network , but account for 30% of the total road accident deaths. In the first six months of 2025 alone, about 26,770 deaths were recorded on the National Highways. Although the government has adopted the 4E strategy (Education-Education, **Engineering-Engineering, Enforcement, and Emergency Medical Service**) to reduce road accidents by 50% by 2030, this figure of deaths is highly alarming which prompted the judiciary to intervene.

2. Article 142 and the concept of 'complete justice'

- **Residuary Nature:** Article 142 confers a specific and extraordinary jurisdiction on the Supreme Court. It is used when the existing laws are silent or unable to provide justice in a specific case. This power is not given by any law, but by the Constitution directly to the apex court in the form of its inherent role.
- **Beyond Legal Barriers:** In the case of Delhi Judicial Service Association vs. State of Gujarat (1991), the Supreme Court had made it clear that restrictions imposed under any common law cannot apply to its constitutional power to do complete justice.
- **Priority to Natural Justice:** According to the Canara Bank vs. Debasise Das (2003) case, the basic purpose of the Constitution is to provide 'Substantive Justice'. If legal justice is proved incapable for any reason, then the principles of natural justice should be followed to ensure complete justice.

3. Can the High Courts also deliver 'complete justice'?

- In the case of Anil Kumar Jain vs. Maya Jain (2009), the Supreme Court had clarified that the powers of the High Courts under Article 226 are not equivalent to the powers enjoyed by the Supreme Court under Article 142.
- However, the nature of justice must always be 'absolute', so the High Courts can also dispense complete justice within their jurisdiction, but their powers are more limited and narrower than those of the Supreme Court.

4. Points of Controversy and Criticism: Judicial Activism vs. Judicial Overreach

- **Violation of Separation of Powers:** Critics argue that the repeated or widespread use of Article 142 **undermines the principle of separation** of powers. Under this, the judiciary sometimes enters into the domain of the executive or the legislature and issues policy directions that come under the purview of making laws.
- **Constitutional Safety Valve:** On the contrary, proponents believe that when established laws prove to be inadequate due to changing socio-economic realities (such as homosexuality, live-in relationships, or new dimensions of road safety), Article 142 acts like a safety valve so that no one is wronged due to the technical shortcomings of the law.

Conclusion

Article 142 is an instrument in the hands of the Indian judiciary that ensures that the formalities of law do not come in the way of genuine justice. Declaring safe travel on National Highways as a fundamental right is the result of this visionary thinking.

However, while exercising this power, the Court must remember its own warning in the Hitesh Bhatnagar (2011) case that this extraordinary jurisdiction must be exercised with utmost caution, restraint and only in unavoidable circumstances, so that the balance between the three organs of democracy is maintained.

UPSC Prelims Exam Study Questions

Question: Which of the following cases deals with the broad interpretation of Article 142?

- (a) Kesavananda Bharati case
- (b) S.R. Bommai case
- (c) Delhi Judicial Service Association vs. State of Gujarat
- (d) Minerva Mills case

Answer: c)

UPSC Mains Practice Questions

Question: "Article 142 makes the Indian judiciary the 'safety valve' of the Constitution. Analyse its relevance in the context of a recent road safety decision. (150 words)



India's energy strategy needs price correction

The Strait of Hormuz is no longer just a geopolitical flashpoint; it has become the fault line of the global energy economy. As tensions in West Asia continue to disrupt shipping through one of the world's most critical maritime corridors, countries across the globe are confronting a harsh reality: energy security is now inseparable from geopolitics. For India, which depends on imports for the overwhelming majority of its crude oil needs, the crisis has exposed both the strength of recent policy interventions and the limits of shielding consumers indefinitely from market realities.

The immediate impact of the conflict has been visible in global crude markets. Brent prices have surged sharply amid fears of prolonged disruption to Gulf supplies, while freight costs and marine insurance premiums have climbed to multi-year highs. Shipping routes are being diverted around the Cape of Good Hope, extending delivery timelines by weeks and significantly increasing transportation expenses. Global gas markets, too, remain under pressure following disruptions linked to the shutdown of key liquefied natural gas export infrastructure in Qatar. Despite this turbulence, the crisis has not hit Indian consumers as ferociously as it should be so far. Petrol and diesel prices at Indian fuel pumps have remained relatively stable, hovering near ₹95 per litre in many cities, even as fuel prices in several advanced economies rose steeply, by about 25% on average. Petrol prices in Germany and the United Kingdom have crossed the equivalent of roughly ₹220 and ₹204 per litre, respectively, while Hong Kong continues to record some of the world's highest fuel prices at nearly ₹291 per litre. This stability is not a coincidence. It has been achieved through an extraordinary combination of state intervention, supply diversification, and financial absorption by public sector oil companies.

Interventions that come at a steep cost

Over the past few years, India has quietly built a more resilient energy architecture. The country expanded its sourcing basket beyond the Gulf, increased strategic reserves, and strengthened ties with suppliers in Russia, the United States, West Africa, and the Atlantic basin. Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri recently reiterated that India's crude supply position remains secure despite disruptions around the Strait of Hormuz, pointing to the country's growing ability to source oil from non-Gulf origins and maintain refinery throughput at high levels.

Taking advantage of the exit of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, India signed an agreement with the UAE to store 30 millions of crude oil in India's Strategic Petroleum Reserve. The government's response since the latest



Thiruvannathapuram S. Ramakrishnan

Public policy expert

escalation has been swift. Refineries were directed to maximise LPG production to meet rising domestic demand, especially given the dramatic expansion of cooking gas access under the Ujjwala scheme. LPG connections in India have risen from roughly 14.5 crore in 2014 to more than 33 crore today, fundamentally transforming household energy consumption patterns. Gas allocation was prioritised for households, public transport networks, and fertilizer plants to avoid cascading disruptions across essential sectors. Domestic LPG production was reportedly increased by nearly 50% during the peak of the crisis response, while all 25 fertilizer plants continued receiving around 70% of their gas requirements to maintain agricultural supply chains. Naval deployments in the Gulf of Oman, diplomatic engagement with multiple countries, and efforts to secure alternative shipping arrangements underline how seriously India has treated the crisis. These measures have bought the country valuable time. But they have also come at a steep cost.

Pressures on oil firms

India's state-run Oil Marketing Companies (OMC) are now operating under enormous financial stress, selling fuel below market-linked costs in order to protect consumers from inflationary shocks. Mr. Puri recently indicated that under-recoveries could rise sharply if elevated crude prices persist, with some estimates placing daily losses near ₹700 crore-₹800 crore during peak volatility. The government has already reduced excise duties and imposed temporary export restrictions on refined fuels to retain supplies within the domestic market.

This strategy may be politically prudent in the short term, but is economically difficult to sustain over a prolonged period. Energy subsidies of this scale eventually strain public finances, weaken the balance sheets of oil companies, and distort market signals that encourage efficient energy consumption.

The larger challenge is that India's vulnerability is structural, not temporary. Nearly every major sector of the economy – transport, logistics, aviation, manufacturing, agriculture, and fertilizers – remains heavily dependent on imported fossil fuels. Even if India succeeds in avoiding immediate shortages, it cannot remain permanently insulated from a prolonged global energy shock.

There are already signs that the government recognises this reality. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeals for responsible energy use – including reducing unnecessary travel, conserving fuel, and encouraging remote work where feasible – reflect an administration preparing the public for a period of prolonged uncertainty. Such messaging would have seemed extraordinary only a few years ago. Today, it

appears pragmatic. There is a strong argument for calibrated correction. India has managed inflation relatively effectively over the past decade compared to many major economies, creating some room for a measured increase in petroleum prices without triggering runaway inflation. Consumer Price Index inflation remained comparatively moderate in early 2026 – at around 3.2% to 3.5% through the first four months of the year – suggesting that limited price rationalisation may still be economically manageable. A gradual pass-through of global energy costs would reduce the fiscal burden on the state, stabilise oil marketing companies, and encourage more responsible consumption patterns.

For now, India has demonstrated remarkable agility in navigating one of the most serious energy disruptions in modern history. Supplies remain stable, panic has been avoided, and the government has managed to shield ordinary citizens from the worst immediate consequences.

The realities of a new energy era

But energy shocks of this scale eventually demand economic realism. The true cost of fuel cannot be deferred forever. India's challenge is no longer merely surviving the crisis; it is preparing the public and the economy for a world in which energy security will remain fragile, contested, and deeply political for years to come.

Recent reports suggest that Indian refiners continue to diversify sourcing aggressively even as global analysts warn that a prolonged Hormuz disruption could widen India's fiscal deficit and weaken the rupee. That should serve as a reminder that the situation is not a temporary headline cycle. It marks the beginning of a new energy era – one in which resilience, diversification, and conservation will matter as much as diplomacy itself. The government has raised petroleum product prices several times, cumulatively by about 7%. Yet, this piecemeal approach neither matches international crude oil prices adequately nor meaningfully reduces the burden on OMCs. Reports suggest that OMCs continue to incur losses of ₹700 crore to ₹800 crore a day, and that only an additional 13% hike, beyond the existing 7%, would eliminate these losses. It has also been reported that the government has returned to adjusting fuel prices in line with fluctuations in international crude oil prices. However, frequent revisions create uncertainty for consumers trying to manage household and business budgets. Instead of incremental increases, the government should implement a one-time price hike of at least 13% on petroleum products, including petrol, diesel, and aviation turbine fuel. Such a move, though difficult, would reduce uncertainty, stabilise OMC finances, and allow prices to remain steady until there is a significant shift in global crude prices.

The petro products price hike is too little and too late

GS Paper II & III: International Relations and Indian Economy

UPSC Mains Practice Questions: How does India's energy import dependence affect its fiscal and macroeconomic stability? Discuss with reference to the recent global energy crisis. **(250 words)**

Context: Geopolitical tensions in West Asia and the Strait of Hormuz crisis have severely affected the global energy market. For a country like India, which imports about 80-85% of its crude oil needs, this crisis is a major test. Although the government has kept fuel prices under control domestically through policy interventions and public sector oil companies (OMCs), the realities of the international market are now raising questions about the economic sustainability of this strategy.

Key Analysis Points

1. Global Market Conditions vs. Domestic Price Stability

- **Global Scenario:** Brent crude prices have soared globally due to the conflict, with marine insurance premiums and freight costs reaching historic highs. Fuel prices have increased by almost 25% in many advanced economies such as Germany (₹220/litre) and the UK (₹204/litre).
- **Indian Market Situation:** In contrast, petrol and diesel prices in India remain relatively stable around ₹95 per litre. This stability has been made possible by supply diversification, the use of strategic oil reserves, and the absorbing losses by oil marketing companies (OMCs).

2. India's Strategic Interventions and Their Limitations

- **Supply Diversification:** India has diversified its energy sources by increasing crude oil imports from Russia, the US, West Africa and the Atlantic Basin, besides the Gulf countries. India has also signed an agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to stock up on 30 million barrels of crude oil to strengthen the Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR).
- **Domestic Gas Management:** Domestic LPG production has been increased by almost 50% considering the number of LPG connections under the Ujjwala scheme (increasing from 14.5 crore to more than 33 crore). Also, 70% gas supply to fertilizer plants has been ensured to maintain the agriculture supply chain.

3. Financial Pressures on Oil Companies (Under-Recoveries)

- Public sector oil companies (such as IOCL, BPCL, HPCL) are selling fuel at a price lower than the cost to protect consumers from the shock of inflation.
- According to estimates, oil companies are currently incurring losses of ₹700 crore to ₹800 crore per day. The recent cumulative price rise of about 7% by the Government has been insufficient to bridge this deficit. According to analysts, a one-time additional increase in prices of at least 13% is necessary to completely offset this financial loss.

4. Structural Vulnerability

- This problem of India is not immediate but structural. Key sectors such as transportation, logistics, aviation, manufacturing, and agriculture are completely dependent on fossil fuels.
- The ever-increasing deficit increases the risk of increasing the fiscal deficit and weakening the Indian rupee, which is not good for long-term economic stability.

5. Favorable time for price correction

- India's Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based retail inflation has been fairly controlled between 3.2% and 3.5% in the early months of 2026.
- This period of low inflation provides an opportunity for the government to make limited and rationalized increases in fuel prices, thereby improving the financial health of oil companies and reducing the fiscal burden without any uncontrolled inflation.

Way Forward

- **Economic Realism:** Frequent small changes create uncertainty among consumers and businesses. Instead, prices should be stabilized by a one-time price correction (an increase of at least 13%, until the global market returns to normal.
- **Promotion of Energy Conservation:** The appeal for responsible energy use made by the Prime Minister (e.g. reducing unnecessary travel, adopting a hybrid/work from home model) should receive broad policy support.
- **Investing in Green Energy:** The long-term solution is not just diversification but a rapid transition to renewable energy (solar, wind) and electric vehicles (EVs) to reduce dependence on imports.

Conclusion

India has demonstrated its strategic agility and diplomatic prowess during this global energy crisis, protecting the common citizens from its immediate impacts. However, this security is coming at a huge economic cost. Accepting the reality of the new energy age, India has to strike a balance between populist policies and fiscal prudence. A bold and transparent price reform will not only save our oil companies from bankruptcy, but also move the country towards more responsible energy consumption.
