



DREAM
FOR NATION



DARE
TO SERVE



DELIVER
WITH INTEGRITY

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS — **ENGLISH FILE** —

BEST FOR UPSC | UP PCS EXAM

DATE : **AUGUST 14, 2026**



Comprehensive
Coverage



Exam-Focused
Analysis



Concept Clarity
& Insights



Practice MCQs
with Explanation



Daily Updates,
Better Results



CONTACT INFO:

+91 92896 33341 | +91 96679 33341



EMAIL ID:

info@sixsigmaias.com



WEB PAGE:

www.sixsigmaias.com



ADDRESS:

C-6, GROUND FLOOR, SECTOR 2,
NEAR SECTOR 15 METRO STATION, NOIDA – 201301, UTTAR PRADESH

Table of Contents

1. India's Trade Diversification and Merchandise Export Surge	2
2. Assam-Arunachal Border Unrest and Inter-State Boundary Dynamics	3
3. MMDR Amendment Bill 2026 and Fiscal Federalism Dynamics	5
4. Rajasthan Cabinet Nod to Uniform Civil Code and Tree Protection Bills	6
5. Demand for Permanent Freeze on Lok Sabha Strength at 543	7
6. IISc Launch of SraVaani Voice AI Model for 65 Indian Languages	9
7. Transparency as the Foundation of Trust in Medicine	10
8. EU AI Act and Strategic Opportunities for India's Tech Sector	11
9. Constitutional Limits on Arrest and Personal Liberty	13
10. Temporary Pause on UK Chevening Fellowships: Strategic Implications for Indo-UK Soft Power Dynamics	15

1. India's Trade Diversification and Merchandise Export Surge

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Surge in Merchandise Exports:** India's merchandise exports grew by 19.6% year-on-year to \$44.2 billion in July, outpacing import growth through effective market diversification strategies.
- **Recovery in West Asia Trade:** Despite geopolitical turmoil, exports to West Asia rose nearly 9% due to strategic rerouting of shipping lines and utilization of alternative ports.
- **Market Expansion:** Significant growth was registered in non-traditional partners like China (65% increase to \$2.2 billion in July), Tanzania (130% growth), as well as East Asia, Australia, and Africa.
- **Total Trade Performance:** India's total exports for July reached \$80.14 billion (13.31% growth), while total imports rose to \$95.16 billion (15.83% growth).
- **Widening Trade Deficit:** The overall trade deficit widened to \$15 billion in July from \$11.4 billion last year, primarily driven by merchandise import volume (\$76.2 billion) and slower service export growth (6.4%) relative to service imports (9.5%).

Essential Definitions

- **Trade Deficit:** An economic condition where the total value of a nation's imported goods and services exceeds the total value of its exported goods and services over a given period.
- **Merchandise Trade:** The physical movement of tangible goods between nations, excluding services, financial assets, and intellectual property transfers.
- **Trade Diversification:** A strategic policy aimed at expanding export markets and broadening the export product base to mitigate reliance on specific partner nations or commodities.

Goods exports surge 20% as India diversifies trade

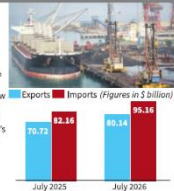
India's exports to West Asia recovered in July amid the crisis after re-routing shipping lines, says Commerce Secretary; trade deficit, however, widens as service exports grow slower than imports

T.C.A. Sharad Raghavan
NEW DELHI

Despite the ongoing turmoil in West Asia, India's merchandise exports saw a growth of nearly 20% in July this year, faster than that of imports, official data released on Thursday show. Notably, exports to West Asia itself have recovered, with July's exports to the region nearly 9% higher than the same period last year. According to Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal, this has been achieved by routing India's trade through different ports and shipping lines. India's merchandise exports stood at \$44.2 billion in July, up 19.6% over its level in the same period last year. According to Mr. Agrawal, this was achieved

Soaring trade

India's total exports for July 2026 grew 13.31% from July 2025, while imports grew by 15.83% in the same period. The chart shows India's total exports and imports in July 2026 compared to the year-ago period.



through continued diversification of export destinations. Merchandise imports, meanwhile, grew at a relatively slower 17.5% in July to \$56.2 billion. "If you look at destination countries, we are now doing well in countries where we typically did not

earlier, such as China, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Vietnam, Austria, Malaysia, and several other countries," Mr. Agrawal said at a press conference. "Even in Africa, in Kenya and the South African Customs Union region, there has been an increase

in exports in the first four months of this financial year," the Commerce Secretary noted. "Tanzania has also been a very strong silver lining where 100% growth in exports has been seen." India's exports to China grew 65% to \$2.2 billion in July, albeit on a low base. Over the course of April-July this year, exports to China grew 36%. However, India's trade deficit still widened to \$15 billion in July from \$11.4 billion in the corresponding period last year as services imports grew faster than services exports. The data show that services exports grew 6.4% in July to \$35.9 billion while imports grew 9.5% to \$18.9 billion.

CONTINUED ON
PAGE 14

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 301 (Freedom of Trade and Commerce):** Guarantees that trade, commerce, and intercourse throughout the territory of India shall be free, subject to reasonable public interest restrictions under Articles 302–304.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Acts as the primary statutory framework authorizing the Central Government to formulate, control, and regulate export-import (EXIM) policies.
- **Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) 2023:** A long-term strategic initiative aimed at promoting India's integration into global supply chains, targetting \$2 trillion in total exports by 2030 through process automation, export hubs, and market diversification.

Conclusion

India's merchandise export performance demonstrates supply-chain adaptability and effective trade diversification strategies amid global geopolitical headwinds. However, managing the widening overall trade deficit requires sustained momentum in high-value service exports alongside continued structural reforms to strengthen manufacturing competitiveness.

UPSC Relevance

- **Syllabus Linkage:** GS Paper-III (Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and international trade).
- **Key Exam Takeaways:** Focus on structural dynamics of Indian trade, mechanisms to manage trade deficits, Foreign Trade Policy objectives, and strategic maritime logistics adjustments.

2. Assam-Arunachal Border Unrest and Inter-State Boundary Dynamics

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Temporary Suspension of Economic Blockade:** Takam Mising Porin Kebang (TMPK), representing the Mising community in Assam, suspended its economic blockade against Arunachal Pradesh following bilateral administrative assurances.

- **48-Hour Ultimatum Issued:** The student body issued a 48-hour deadline for the arrest of four Arunachal-based individuals implicated in an August 10 firing incident in Mingmang Bodoti, Dhemaji district.
- **Root Cause in Land Disputes:** The violent flare-up, which injured 11 people in Assam's Dhemaji district bordering Likabali (Arunachal Pradesh), stems from recurring inter-state land entitlement claims.
- **High-Level Inter-State Mediation:** Cabinet ministers from Assam engaged with TMPK leaders, while Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and Arunachal CM Pema Khandu urged calm and cooperative action between police forces.
- **Persistent Ground-Level Frictions:** Despite macro-level political accords like the 2022 Namsai Declaration and 2023 border MoU, localized disputes over agricultural land and village boundaries continue to pose internal security challenges.

Assam outfit suspends 'blockade' imposed on Arunachal boundary

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

Tension along the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh boundary eased on Thursday night after Takam Mising Porin Kebang (TMPK), the apex student body of Assam's Mising community, suspended the "economic blockade" of Arunachal Pradesh. However, it gave a 48-hour ultimatum to arrest four Arunachal Pradesh-based persons accused in the August 10 firing incident that took place over a land dispute. On Wednesday, the TMPK and other groups had launched the blockade in protest against the firing in which 11 persons from



Protesters in Assam blocking a road leading to Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Assam were injured in the Mingmang Bodoti area of Assam's Dhemaji district. After talks with the Assam government and civil society groups of Arunachal Pradesh on Thursday, the TMPK said: "Assurances were given regarding action on the core demands raised

by the TMPK. In view of these assurances and in consideration of the difficulties being faced by the common people, the TMPK has decided to temporarily suspend the blockade."

Earlier in the day, officials in Dhemaji said police restored order by firing blank shots after a scuffle between people from both States followed an incident of stone-pelting. The violence was reported from an area adjoining Likabali in Arunachal Pradesh.

Officials of both the States had expected tension along the boundary to ease after Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Arunachal Pradesh counterpart Pema

Khandu appealed for calm, and promised action against those responsible for the firing.

Following the renewed unrest, the Assam government rushed Ministers Atul Bora and Ranaj Pegu to Dhemaji. They held a meeting with the TMPK leaders and several other organisations.

"TMPK president Tilak Doley said the meeting was positive. "They accepted our demands and said these would be fulfilled through dialogue," he said. Mr. Pegu told the TMPK leaders that Assam police have requested their Arunachal Pradesh counterparts to hand over the four persons accused of firing.

Essential Definitions

- **Economic Blockade:** A protest tactic involving the disruption of highway corridors to restrict the movement of trade, fuel, and essential supplies into a neighbouring state or territory.
- **Inter-State Boundary Dispute:** A territorial disagreement between constituent states of a federation regarding administrative jurisdiction, boundary demarcation, or land ownership.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 3 of the Constitution:** Vests Parliament with supreme authority to alter state boundaries, change names, or form new states.
- **Article 131:** Grants the Supreme Court original jurisdiction to hear legal disputes between state governments or between the Union and states.
- **Article 263:** Authorizes the creation of an Inter-State Council to facilitate consensus-building, policy coordination, and investigation of inter-state issues.
- **North-Eastern Areas (Reorganisation) Act, 1971:** Historical legislation that reorganized Greater Assam, laying the structural baseline for boundary relations across Northeast India.

Conclusion

While top-level bilateral declarations provide necessary momentum, enduring peace along North-Eastern borders requires precise physical demarcation by the Survey of India and institutionalized local peace committees to address grass-root administrative grievances.

UPSC Relevance

- **Syllabus Linkage:** GS Paper-II (Indian Constitution, Cooperative Federalism, Inter-State Relations, and Internal Security Challenges).
- **Key Exam Takeaways:** Study mechanisms of inter-state conflict resolution (Articles 3, 131, 263), structural reorganization of Northeast India, and the role of local ethnic bodies in border security management.

3. MMDR Amendment Bill 2026 and Fiscal Federalism Dynamics

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Parliamentary Clearance:** Both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha passed the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, restricting state governments from imposing additional taxes, cesses, or levies on mineral rights or mineral-bearing lands.
- **Centralized Regulation:** The Bill expands Union regulatory control over mineral-bearing lands in addition to existing regulation over mine development.
- **Invalidation of Past Dues:** Any uncollected state tax, cess, or levy imposed prior to the commencement of this Act is deemed invalid, though previously collected amounts will not be refunded.
- **Objections by States:** Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren termed it a "black Bill," warning of widespread agitation due to its impact on state welfare finances, as Jharkhand holds 40% of India's mineral reserves.
- **Federal Structure Concerns:** Leaders from States such as Kerala and Jharkhand argued the legislation severely encroaches upon state jurisdiction over land and mineral taxation rights.
- **Objective of the Centre:** The Union Government asserts the law aims to prevent disproportionate fiscal burdens on extraction, establish price uniformity, attract investments, and safeguard national economic growth.

Minerals belong to Jharkhand, land belongs to Jharkhand: CM

Soren warns of massive agitation against amendment bill passed by Parliament, says his State, which has about 40% of India's total minerals, won't tolerate this stepmotherly treatment

Amrit Dhillon
PATNA

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Thursday strongly opposed the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, passed by Parliament on Thursday, which seeks to restrict States' powers to levy taxes on mineral rights and mineral-bearing lands.

The Lok Sabha passed the bill on Wednesday while the Rajya Sabha cleared it on Thursday, completing the parliamentary approval process. The bill will become a law after receiving the President's assent.

'Black Bill'
Calling the legislation a "black Bill" and an injustice to the people of Jharkhand, Mr. Soren warned of a massive agitation against



Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren called it a "black Bill" and said it undermines the State's rights over its mineral resources. H.S. NATH

the Centre's move. "The entire nation will witness. Minerals belong to Jharkhand, land belongs to Jharkhand, so why should Delhi decide on our rights and entitlements? In haste, the Central government passed the Mines and Minerals (Development and

and future, Jharkhand will not tolerate this stepmotherly treatment. In Jharkhand, schemes providing social security to millions - such as the Matsya Samman Yojana, Abia Awas Yojana, pension, education, health, and others - will be on the verge of closure. The Jharkhand Mahila March strongly opposes this," the Chief Minister said.

Statewide protest
Mr. Soren added that there will be force opposition to the move in "every district, every block, every panchayat, every town". "If the Central government does not come to its senses and talks to restore to Jharkhand and its people their rights and entitlements, Jharkhand will not shy away from taking decisive and historic decisions either," he said.

Mines Bill is a grave threat to our federal structure: Kerala CM

The Hindu Bureau
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Chief Minister V.D. Sarbeshan on Thursday said the State government would mount strong political and, if necessary, legal opposition to the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026, passed by the Lok Sabha on Wednesday.

He said the legislation amounted to "a serious encroachment on the State's constitutional powers over land and poses a grave threat to India's federal structure". Addressing media persons after a Cabinet meeting, Mr. Sarbeshan said the State's principal objection was that the amendment sought to bring powers relating to land, which comes under Entry 18 of the State List, within the Centre's sphere of authority.

He said the Constitution clearly distributed legislative powers between the Union, State and Concurrent Lists, with States having exclusive authority over subjects in the State List. Land, he pointed out, falls under Entry 18 and therefore comes within the State's legislative jurisdiction. Mr. Sarbeshan alleged that the Centre was attempting to expand its jurisdiction through the definition of "mineral bearing land", without excluding coastal areas and forests.



Kerala CM V.D. Sarbeshan during a press conference at the Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram.

Essential Definitions

- **Mineral Rights:** Legal entitlements granted to extract, possess, and commercialize subsurface mineral deposits from designated land areas.
- **Fiscal Federalism:** The division of taxation powers, legislative responsibilities, and financial resources between central and regional levels of government.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Entry 23, State List (Seventh Schedule):** Grants states power over regulation of mines and mineral development, subject to provisions of the Union List.
- **Entry 50, State List (Seventh Schedule):** Empowers states to levy taxes on mineral rights, subject to limitations imposed by Parliament by law relating to mineral development.
- **Entry 18, State List (Seventh Schedule):** Covers state legislative powers over land, rights in or over land, land tenures, and collection of rents.
- **Entry 54, Union List (Seventh Schedule):** Empowers the Centre to regulate mines and mineral development to the extent declared by Parliament by law to be expedient in the public interest.

- **Article 246:** Establishes the distribution of legislative power between Parliament and State Legislatures across Union, State, and Concurrent Lists.
- **July 2024 Supreme Court Ruling:** A 9-judge Constitution Bench held that states have the power to levy tax on mineral rights and mineral-bearing land under Entry 50, State List.

Conclusion

The MMDR Amendment Bill, 2026 seeks to streamline national supply chains and prevent disparate state taxation. However, restricting state fiscal autonomy over mineral-bearing lands reignites federal disputes, requiring a balanced framework that reconciles ease of doing business with state revenue requirements.

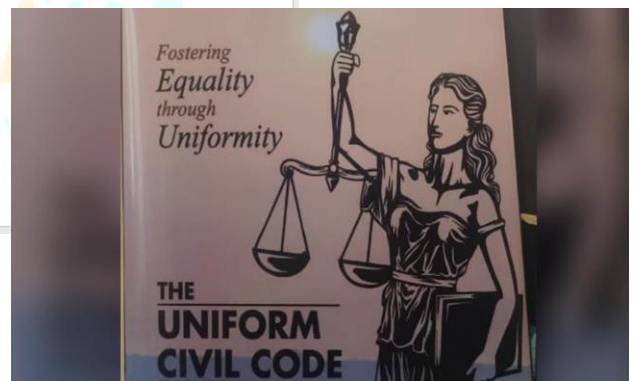
UPSC Relevance

- **Syllabus Linkage:** GS Paper-II (Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers and Finances) and GS Paper-III (Indian Economy, Infrastructure, Mining Sector).
- **Key Exam Takeaways:** Focus on Union-State fiscal relations, constitutional friction points in the Seventh Schedule, the 2024 Supreme Court 9-judge bench ruling on mineral taxation, and strategic resource governance.

4. Rajasthan Cabinet Nod to Uniform Civil Code and Tree Protection Bills

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Cabinet Approval for Twin Bills:** The Rajasthan Cabinet approved the drafts of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill and the Trees (Protection) Bill, set to be tabled in the Assembly's Monsoon Session.
- **Comprehensive Personal Law Reform:** The proposed UCC provides a uniform legal framework governing marriage, divorce, inheritance, maintenance, and live-in relationships while prohibiting polygamy.
- **Mandatory Registration Timeline:** The UCC mandates the registration of all marriages and divorces within 60 days of occurrence, while safeguarding solemnization through diverse religious customs (such as Saptapadi, Nikah, Anand Karaj, and Holy Union).
- **Gender Parity in Inheritance:** The draft code guarantees equal property inheritance rights to sons and daughters across all religions, overriding conflicting personal laws.
- **Exemption for Scheduled Tribes:** To protect cultural autonomy, Scheduled Tribes and classes with constitutionally protected customary rights are explicitly exempted from the UCC's ambit.
- **Protection of Flora:** The Trees (Protection) Bill provides special legal protection to 29 specified tree species across the state, including Khejri (*Prosopis cineraria*), the state tree of Rajasthan.



Essential Definitions

- **Uniform Civil Code (UCC):** A single set of secular civil laws governing personal matters such as marriage, divorce, custody, adoption, and succession for all citizens regardless of religion.
- **Personal Laws:** A set of customary or scriptural rules applied to individuals based on their religious affiliation or community identity in family and property matters.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 44 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Directs the State to endeavor to secure for citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India.
- **Entry 5, Concurrent List (Seventh Schedule):** Grants joint legislative jurisdiction to Parliament and State Assemblies over marriage, divorce, adoption, wills, intestacy, and succession.
- **Article 25–28 (Fundamental Rights):** Guarantees freedom of religion, subject to public order, morality, health, and other fundamental rights under Part III of the Constitution.
- **Article 163:** Empowers the Cabinet headed by the Chief Minister to aid and advise the Governor in exercising executive and legislative functions.

Conclusion

Rajasthan's dual legislative push reflects an attempt to harmonize social governance through personal law standardization under Article 44 while advancing ecological conservation. Balancing uniform legal rights with constitutional guarantees for minority customs and tribal protections remains essential for maintaining social cohesion.

UPSC Relevance

- **Syllabus Linkage:** GS Paper-II (Indian Constitution—Directive Principles of State Policy, Federalism, Concurrent List) and GS Paper-III (Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity).
- **Key Exam Takeaways:** Analyze the constitutional validity of state-level UCC enactments under Article 44 read with Entry 5 of the Concurrent List, tribal customary law protections, and statutory frameworks for regional biodiversity conservation.

5. Demand for Permanent Freeze on Lok Sabha Strength at 543

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Chief Minister's Communication:** Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi enclosing a resolution passed by the State Assembly on August 12, requesting a constitutional amendment to permanently freeze Lok Sabha seats at 543.
- **Preserving Interstate Distribution:** The resolution demands retaining the existing proportional distribution of seats among States and Union Territories, as well as preserving the current Lok Sabha to Rajya Sabha ratio of 2.2:1.
- **Unlink Women's Quota from Delimitation:** The state urges immediate implementation of 33% reservation for women (106th Amendment) starting from the 2029 elections based on the current 543 seats, without waiting for post-census delimitation.

- **Demographic Penalty Apprehension:** Southern states express deep concern that redrawing constituencies using post-1971 population metrics will penalize them for successfully executing family planning, economic growth, and social welfare programs.
- **Historical Precedent:** The resolution highlighted that during the 1967 delimitation, Tamil Nadu's Lok Sabha representation was reduced from 41 to 39 seats due to population adjustments, creating historical anxieties over seat reallocation.
- **Federal Injustice Argument:** Altering seat proportions based on post-1971 population data threatens to cause lasting political marginalization and a reduction in electoral voice for states with lower fertility rates.

Essential Definitions

- **Delimitation:** The process of fixing or redrawing territorial boundaries of parliamentary or assembly constituencies to reflect population changes, ensuring roughly equal voter distribution.
- **Demographic Federalism:** A principle balancing democratic representation (one person, one vote) with structural protection for federal units that achieve national demographic stabilization goals.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 81:** Outlines the composition of the Lok Sabha, requiring the ratio between seats and state population to be uniform across states as far as practicable.
- **Article 82:** Mandates the readjustment of allocation of seats and territorial division of constituencies after each national population census.
- **84th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2001:** Extended the freeze on the total number of Lok Sabha seats at 543 (originally enacted via 42nd Amendment, 1976 using 1971 Census figures) until the first census after the year 2026.
- **106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023:** Mandates 33% seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, specified to take effect after the first census and subsequent delimitation.

Conclusion

The debate highlights the core tension between numerical democracy based on current demographic reality and federal equity for states achieving key national social indicators. Reconciling fair legislative representation with incentives for population control will require a consensus-driven policy approach during future constitutional reviews.

UPSC Relevance

- **Syllabus Linkage:** GS Paper-II (Indian Constitution—Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers, Issues Pertaining to Representation of States, and Parliamentary Dynamics).
- **Key Exam Takeaways:** Study the constitutional mechanics of delimitation (Articles 81 and 82), history of constitutional seat freezes, the 106th Amendment implementation clause, and federal concerns surrounding demographic imbalance.

Amend Constitution to freeze Lok Sabha strength at 543, T.N. CM writes to PM

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay on Thursday wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, enclosing a copy of the resolution moved by him and adopted by the Assembly on August 12, urging the Centre to bring an amendment to the Constitution to freeze the number of Lok Sabha seats at 543, and retain the current proportion of inter-State distribution of seats.



Any delimitation based on the post-1971 population that altered the existing strength would cause a lasting injustice to the southern States.

Any delimitation based on the post-1971 population that altered the existing strength would cause a lasting injustice to the southern States, which had efficiently implemented population-control programmes, achieved good economic growth, and carried out healthcare and welfare schemes, the CM added.

Assembly had adopted a resolution urging the Union government to make constitutional amendments for a permanent freeze on the strength of the Lok Sabha, maintain the current proportional distribution of seats among the States and the Union Territories, and retain the Lok Sabha-Rajya Sabha seat ratio at the current 2:1.

The resolution also

6. IISc Launch of SraVaani Voice AI Model for 65 Indian Languages

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Launch of SraVaani AI Model:** Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), via its SPIRE Lab, in collaboration with ARTPARK and Google, released SraVaani, India's first open-source multilingual speech recognition AI model.
- **Coverage of Non-Scheduled Languages:** The model supports 65 Indian languages and dialects, including 20 scheduled languages under the Eighth Schedule and 45 regional or tribal languages that currently lack official digital recognition tools.
- **Inclusion of Underserved Population:** The initiative extends voice AI and automatic speech recognition (ASR) access to over 25 crore people speaking dialectal and non-scheduled languages (as per the 2011 Census).
- **Broad Geographic Inclusion:** Supports underserved regional languages across all Indian zones, including Garo, Kokborok, Angika, Chakma, Tulu, Bundeli, and Bajjika.
- **High Accuracy on Low-Resource Languages:** Achieved significantly improved accuracy on low-resource languages, such as recording a 9.5% Word Error Rate (WER) on Garo, compared to 69.4% in conventional systems.
- **Open-Source Availability:** Published freely on Hugging Face under the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) licence to promote public research, innovation, and local software adaptation.

AI speech recognition model trained on 65 Indian languages and dialects released

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Researchers at Indian Institute of Science (IISc)'s SPIRE Lab, in collaboration with ARTPARK and Google, have released SraVaani, the first multilingual Indian speech recognition model trained on 65 Indian languages and dialects, including over 40 languages that today's speech recognition systems do not officially support.

Designed to take speech AI beyond scheduled languages, SraVaani extends automatic speech recognition to several regional and non-scheduled Indian languages that remain underserved by existing speech technology. The model is



The IISc team's SraVaani model covers 20 scheduled languages and 45 regional languages and dialects. FILE PHOTO

freely and publicly available on Hugging Face under a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) licence.

While most speech AI systems work effectively in only a handful of dominant languages, leaving many of

the languages and dialects spoken across India with no reliable speech-to-text capabilities, SraVaani addresses this gap.

It covers 20 scheduled languages and 45 regional languages and dialects, potentially opening speech AI

capabilities to around 25 crore people as per the 2011 census, whose languages are not properly handled by current systems.

The model supports languages such as Garo, Angika, Chakma, Kokborok, Tulu, Bundeli and Bajjika. Results on several of these languages are particularly strong, including a 9.5% word error rate on Garo, compared with 69.4% for the best system evaluated.

"At IISc, research has always been in service to the nation, and SraVaani, serving more than 60 Indian languages, is a contribution towards that," said Govindan Rangarajan, Director, IISc.

Essential Definitions

- **Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR):** A branch of artificial intelligence and computational linguistics that processes human spoken language into machine-readable text format.
- **Word Error Rate (WER):** A standard metric used to measure the accuracy of automatic speech recognition systems, calculated as the ratio of word errors (substitutions, deletions, insertions) to total reference words.
- **Scheduled vs Non-Scheduled Languages:** Scheduled languages are those officially listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, whereas non-scheduled languages are regional, tribal, or minority mother tongues outside the list.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Eighth Schedule (Articles 344(1) & 351):** Lists 22 officially recognized languages; Article 351 directs the Union to promote the spread and enrichment of Hindi while respecting regional linguistic heritage.
- **Article 29(1):** Guarantees fundamental rights to any section of citizens residing in India to conserve their distinct language, script, or culture.
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020:** Emphasizes mother tongue and regional language instruction in early education, supported by digital voice technologies.

- **Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023:** Regulates the ethical collection, storage, and processing of voice and linguistic datasets used for machine learning.

Conclusion

The release of SraVaani represents a major milestone in democratic AI expansion, bridging India's digital language gap. By providing open-source ASR capabilities for non-scheduled and tribal languages, it ensures technology-driven social inclusion, preserving endangered linguistic heritage while unlocking e-governance and educational services for underserved populations.

UPSC Relevance

- **Syllabus Linkage:** GS Paper-II (Social Justice, Governance, Protection of Minority Rights) and GS Paper-III (Science and Technology—Artificial Intelligence, Indigenous Technology Development).
- **Key Exam Takeaways:** Analyze AI applications in bridging the digital divide, constitutional guarantees for linguistic minorities under Articles 29 and 351, open-source technology frameworks, and the role of digital inclusion in governance.

7. Transparency as the Foundation of Trust in Medicine

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Imperative of Institutional Transparency:** Public trust in healthcare relies heavily on accessible regulatory frameworks, such as user-friendly online registries managed by State Medical Councils to verify doctor credentials.
- **Systemic Design over Individual Blame:** Modern healthcare frameworks must transition from penalizing individual practitioners to adopting World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines that analyze systemic design flaws behind medical errors [cite: Rather than placing blame entirely on individuals when things go wrong, modern health-care systems — following World Health Organization guidelines — are moving toward analysing the systemic design flaws that allow mistakes to occur in the first place.].
- **Culture of Open Disclosure:** Establishing a formal practice of open disclosure ensures structured, honest communication with patients regarding medical complications, financial costs, and therapeutic uncertainties.
- **Mitigating Workplace Violence:** With over 75% of Indian doctors experiencing workplace violence, proactive communication and transparent administrative processes serve as protective shields against systemic mistrust and conflict escalation.
- **Shift to Shared Decision-Making:** Moving from paternalistic medicine to collaborative decision-making requires plain-language diagnostic explanations, periodic patient progress updates, and embedded clinical communication training for medical students.

Transparency as the foundation of trust in medicine

India marked Doctor's Day on July 1, but the occasion demands that we continue to look beyond well-deserved expressions of gratitude and reflect on the structural tensions that strain public confidence in health care. Trust in medicine is frequently thought of as a sacred, isolated bond between patient and doctor. In reality, that trust is forged much earlier — within the institutions that regulate care, the systems that deliver it, and the transparency that connects them.

The limitations of this system are readily observable. This writer tried the simple exercise of verifying a doctor's credentials on the Tamil Nadu Medical Council (TNMC) website. What should have been a straightforward search turned out to be unexpectedly challenging. The system required specific details, such as the doctor's exact registration number, which are not easily available to the public. When the doctor's checkbox was missed or the website was simply not designed with the public — or even a colleague concerned — in mind, the experience pointed to a larger question: how much does institutional transparency shape public faith in medicine?

How institutions build trust
In many western countries, public trust is maintained through highly accessible regulatory frameworks. For example, the United Kingdom's General Medical Council (GMC) hosts a publicly searchable register where anyone can quickly verify a doctor's qualifications, registration status, and any history of regulatory restrictions. Similarly, the provincial Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons in Canada require minimal identifying information to view a physician's professional profile. These organisations explicitly signal that professional standards are being ensured through peer review, continuing education, and clear processes for handling complaints. This transparency does more than just share data; it reassures people that medical practice is open to independent scrutiny, creating a safe environment where individual doctor-patient relationships can thrive.

India's clinical landscape is evolving admirably, with a workforce that is known for its excellent clinical acumen despite working under considerable constraints. While the National Medical Commission has taken steps to improve medical education and professional standards in recent years, public-facing regulatory transparency remains uneven. State Medical Councils, including the TNMC, hold digital registers, but the ease with which a regular patient can navigate them varies. As India continues its digital transformation, making these regulatory portals genuinely user-friendly is a



Vincent Arackkalam
Clinical Assistant Professor of Paediatrics, Bangalore Children's Hospital, Bengaluru, India. He is also an Associate Professor, Department of Paediatrics, University of British Columbia, Canada, and also involved in medical professional regulation.

low-hanging opportunity to reinforce public trust at its foundation.

Beyond individual blame between regulatory bodies and individual consultation rooms to the systems of care — hospitals, clinics, and their organisational processes. These daily workflows heavily influence patient satisfaction, shaping perceptions of fairness long before a clinical outcome is reached.

System transparency requires clear communication about medical costs, operational processes, and pathways to register a grievance. Crucially, it also means having an internal culture of medical auditing, rather than placing blame entirely on individuals when things go wrong.

Modern health-care systems — following World Health Organization guidelines — are moving toward analysing the systemic design flaws that allow mistakes to occur in the first place.

This approach requires a formal culture of "Open Disclosure" — in advanced medical jurisdictions, being honest when things go wrong is a professional requirement, not an option. It involves a structured, honest conversation with the patient or their family, acknowledging the incident, explaining how it occurred, and detailing the steps being taken to prevent recurrence.

Formalising open disclosure in India, right from the ground level of clinical care, would be transformative. When hospitals support their doctors to be transparent about clinical uncertainties or complications, they reduce the emotional burden on the practitioner and prevent potential friction with families. A lack of clear information breeds suspicion. When processes are opaque or difficult to navigate, public dissatisfaction builds rapidly — even if the final clinical care delivered was appropriate.

Much of this friction arises not from malice, but from a mismatch between patients' expectations and their actual experience.

India has a worrying rise in violence against health-care workers. The Indian Medical Association reports that over 75% of doctors have faced some form of workplace violence. While the root causes are multifactorial, deep-seated systemic mistrust is often the spark that escalates conflict. In these high-stress settings, transparency is a protective shield, not an administrative burden. A system that is completely honest about limitations and constraints within clinical care makes it less likely that individual frontline doctors will become the sole targets of a family's anger and resentment.

At the ground level, the doctor-patient relationship remains the ultimate test of the

profession — a space where high-stakes decisions are made in moments of profound human vulnerability. Here, transparency transitions from policy into a purely human interaction.

Modern patients increasingly expect clarity regarding who is treating them and why specific clinical decisions are chosen. This means explaining a diagnosis in plain language, detailing the rationale behind investigations, discussing therapeutic alternatives, and being transparent about costs and complications. Providing proactive, periodic updates on a patient's progress — or lack thereof — is often the single most effective way to ease a family's distress.

This shift toward shared decision-making requires that transparency in treatment is about relationships, not just data. However, if transparency is to be a core part of modern medicine, it must be integrated into medical education. This could be taught in lecture halls alone; it must be actively modelled by senior doctors during everyday clinical practice and teaching. By embedding this culture of communication early, we prepare the next generation of physicians to navigate increasing public expectations.

In my experience, the majority of conflicts in health care do not arise from the medical decisions themselves, but from how those decisions were communicated and understood.

When patients feel genuinely heard and, indeed, the bond is strengthened. When communication is poor, even appropriate care may be perceived as inadequate.

A final reflection
Doctors need safe, respectful, and dignified environments in which to work. Patients require reassurance that the care they receive is both ethical and competent. These are not competing demands; they are mutually reinforcing traits.

Trust in medicine is built collectively by what our institutions make visible. How our clinical care systems function, how doctors and patients talk to one another. When transparency runs through all three layers, it steps being an abstract ethical principle and becomes part of everyday practice.

Doctors' Day has passed, words of appreciation are important, but the days after also invite a structural look at our systems. At a time when the medical profession is practising under unprecedented strain, enhancing transparency in regulatory frameworks, clinical guidelines, and individual consultation rooms is the most successful way to protect the integrity of the profession. Trust is not an entitlement to be claimed; it is a professional pact that must be continuously renewed through transparency.

Transparency across regulatory bodies, hospital systems, and clinical care can strengthen public faith and trust

Essential Definitions

- **Open Disclosure:** A structured policy framework of honest communication with patients and their families when an unexpected clinical adverse event or medical error occurs during care delivery [cite: Crucially, it also means having an internal culture of “Open Disclosure”... It involves a structured, honest conversation with the patient or their family, acknowledging the incident, explaining how it occurred, and detailing the steps being taken to prevent recurrence.].
- **Medical Auditing:** A systematic review of healthcare processes, patient records, and clinical outcomes to assess compliance with professional standards and identify systemic vulnerabilities.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty):** Encompasses the right to health, clean environment, and quality healthcare as affirmed by the Supreme Court in *Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samity v. State of West Bengal (1996)*.
- **National Medical Commission (NMC) Act, 2019:** Governs medical education, professional ethics, and national registration through bodies like the Ethics and Medical Registration Board (EMRB).
- **Consumer Protection Act, 2019:** Regulates healthcare services under the ambit of service delivery, allowing remedies for medical negligence while maintaining accountability.
- **Clinical Establishments (Registration and Regulation) Act, 2010:** Mandates standard operational practices, display of service charges, and minimum infrastructure requirements for health facilities.

Conclusion

Building resilient healthcare systems requires integrating regulatory accessibility, systemic error audits, and empathetic patient communication. Treating transparency as a structural obligation rather than an administrative burden safeguards frontline doctors and upholds public confidence in clinical medicine.

UPSC Relevance

- **Syllabus Linkage:** GS Paper-II (Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Governance, Transparency and Accountability) and GS Paper-IV (Medical Ethics, Professional Ethics, and Human Values).
- **Key Exam Takeaways:** Focus on structural healthcare reforms, mechanisms to curb workplace violence against medical personnel, institutional accountability under the NMC Act, and ethical dimensions of doctor-patient relationships.

8. EU AI Act and Strategic Opportunities for India's Tech Sector

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Extraterritorial Impact of EU AI Act:** Entered into force in August 2024 with key provisions taking effect in August 2026, the Act applies risk-based governance (prohibiting extreme risks, strictly regulating high-risk cases, and enforcing light checks on limited-risk models) to foreign providers whose AI outputs are used in Europe [cite: The Government of India has

Structural Mismatch with Indian IT Model: The Act assumes software is sold as a finished product cleared via a 'conformity assessment' (Article 43). This creates friction for India's service-oriented model, where continuous post-deployment modifications or bespoke client updates can trigger costly re-assessments [cite: India's technology industry has never worked that way... if the system is “substantially modified”, the process must be repeated... Businesses that rely on bespoke services... may find it harder to demonstrate that future changes fall within the scope of the original assessment.].

- ## Europe's AI rules may become India's opportunity

paperwork and proof. Most providers will be permitted to carry out that conformity assessment themselves, but they will do so against harmonised technical standards still being drafted. The underlying work – governance measures, technical documentation, testing regimes – has to be done in volume. The scale of this obligation is likely to generate demand for quality legal and technical professionals, which it may provide. Indian professional services firms have supported clients across data protection, financial regulation and technical assurance. They can provide regulatory capability for the Act too.

The India-EU Free Trade Agreement that was concluded last year includes provisions on machinery and regulatory cooperation provisions. If India can secure institutional arrangements as part of its partnership with the EU, it could become not just a supplier of AI compliance services but also a participant in the EU's conformity assessment ecosystem. Going ahead, it would provide the legal gateway through which qualified Indian conformity assessment bodies could eventually perform functions that are presently performed by EU-qualified bodies. India has already written itself a mountain of compliances and India has the capacity to do it. There is a version of this where the rules India fears become the work it sells. Which version arises is still being decided.

- ## Essential Definitions

- **Conformity Assessment:** A mandatory procedure under Article 43 of the EU AI Act through which providers demonstrate that a high-risk AI system fulfills testing, documentation, and risk mitigation standards prior to market deployment [cite: Before a 'high-risk' AI system, used for sensitive decisions such as hiring or education, can enter the European market, it must clear a 'conformity assessment' under Article 43: proof that it meets the law's standards on testing, documentation and human oversight.].
- **Substantial Modification:** Any change or upgrade to an AI system post-approval that alters its intended purpose or impacts its legal compliance, triggering a fresh conformity assessment requirement [cite: A substantial modification is a change not contemplated at the time of the original assessment, one that affects its compliance or alters its intended

purpose... an unplanned improvement that changes an AI system's intended purpose may trigger a fresh regulatory exercise.].

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 19(1)(g):** Guarantees the fundamental right to practice any profession or carry on any occupation, trade, or business, providing the baseline for domestic regulatory design in tech services.
- **EU AI Act (Regulation (EU) 2024/1689):** World's first comprehensive horizontal legislative framework establishing risk tiers, extraterritorial obligations, and strict penalties for non-compliant AI applications.
- **India-EU Trade and Technology Council (TTC) & FTA Framework:** Bilateral platforms enabling regulatory convergence, mutual recognition of technical standards, and cross-border data governance cooperation.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023:** Regulates the processing of digital personal data, aligning India's domestic privacy protections closer to global norms like Europe's GDPR.

Conclusion

While the EU AI Act presents operational challenges for agile Indian software modifications, it offers a major commercial opportunity. By leveraging bilateral trade channels and mobilizing its professional talent, India can transition from being merely subject to global regulations to becoming a premier hub for AI compliance, certification, and technical audit services.

UPSC Relevance

- **Syllabus Linkage:** GS Paper-II (Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings involving India; Important International Institutions) and GS Paper-III (Science and Technology—Developments, Applications, Effect on Everyday Life and Industry).
- **Key Exam Takeaways:** Analyze the extraterritorial effects of international regulations (Brussels Effect), trade-technology diplomacy through FTAs, legal challenges of regulating evolving AI architectures, and strategies to expand service exports into technical compliance markets.

9. Constitutional Limits on Arrest and Personal Liberty

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Mandatory Communication of Grounds:** In *Vihaan Kumar v. State of Haryana (2025)*, the Supreme Court held that every arrested person must be directly and meaningfully informed of the grounds for their arrest [cite: Recently, the Supreme Court, in *Vihaan Kumar v. State of Haryana (2025)*, held that every arrested person must be properly and meaningfully informed of the grounds for his arrest. ... Therefore, the arrested person must be directly informed of the grounds of arrest in a manner that enables him to understand them.].
- **Invalidation of Remand Orders:** Merely informing relatives or issuing ambiguous arrest records fails constitutional tests; an illegal initial arrest renders subsequent judicial remand orders invalid [cite: Considering this, the verdict says that communicating the details of the arrest to relatives or providing ambiguous records does not satisfy the constitutional

requirements. ... if the initial arrest was unconstitutional, subsequent remand orders would also be deemed illegal.].

- **Timely Production Before Magistrate:** Arrest memos must explicitly record the exact time of arrest to enforce the mandate of producing the detainee before a local magistrate within 24 hours, excluding travel time [cite: Moreover, to fulfill the requirements of Article 22(2) and Section 57 of the CrPC (Section 58 of the BNSS, 2023), the arrest memo must contain the time of arrest. These constitutional and legal provisions say that the police must present the arrested person to a local magistrate within 24 hours, excluding the travel time.].
- **Check on Routine Arrests:** Reaffirming *Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar (2014)*, the Court emphasized that arrest must be an exception, requiring written justification of necessity rather than routine execution for offenses punishable by less than seven years [cite: In *Arnesh Kumar v. State of Bihar (2014)*, the Supreme Court laid down guidelines for arrests... In the guidelines, the court said that arrests should be an exception in cases where the punishment is less than seven years... Thus, routine arrests cannot be made merely because the power to arrest has been given to the police.].
- **Right to Custodial Dignity:** Degrading treatment during custody violates Article 21, prompting directions to amend state procedural frameworks to protect personal dignity.
- **Arbitrariness vs. The Golden Triangle:** Arbitrary arrests breach the fundamental link between Articles 14, 19, and 21 (the "Golden Triangle"), undermining substantive and procedural natural justice [cite: Further, the Golden Triangle of India's Constitution as explained by the Supreme Court in *Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978)* suggests that Article 21 is related to Articles 14 and 19... Therefore, any arbitrary exercise of the power of arrest or detention would amount to a violation of the Golden Triangle.].



Essential Definitions

- **Arrest vs. Detention:** Arrest is formal police custody based on probable cause of an offense, whereas detention is a temporary restriction for investigative inquiry without formal criminal charges.
- **Preventive Detention:** Action taken by state authorities to detain an individual to prevent them from committing potential future crimes, distinct from punitive detention imposed after judicial trial.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 21:** Guarantees protection of life and personal liberty, including freedom from arbitrary, degrading, or inhumane treatment while in custodial confinement.
- **Article 22(1):** Entitles arrested persons to be informed as soon as may be of the grounds of arrest and guarantees the right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner.
- **Article 22(2):** Mandates production of every arrested individual before the nearest magistrate within 24 hours of arrest.

- **Section 35, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023:** Formerly Section 41 CrPC; specifies conditions where police may arrest without a warrant and requires recording written reasons for necessity.
- **Section 58, BNSS, 2023:** Formerly Section 57 CrPC; restricts police detention of an arrested person beyond 24 hours without specific authorization from a magistrate.

Conclusion

Procedural rigor in execution of arrests is essential to maintain the delicate balance between state authority and civil liberty [cite: The constitutionality of arrest in India needs to be examined to reinforce democratic values and ensure that the authority of the state and the liberty of the citizen are properly balanced... framers of the Constitution ensured that a delicate balance between authority and liberty is maintained...]. By strictly enforcing Article 22 mandates and ruling out routine arrests, judicial decisions safeguard natural justice and human dignity within the criminal justice system.

UPSC Relevance

- **Syllabus Linkage:** GS Paper-II (Fundamental Rights, Indian Constitution—Procedures, Safeguards, Judicial Pronouncements, and Criminal Justice System Reform).
- **Key Exam Takeaways:** Analyze procedural safeguards under Article 22, the Golden Triangle doctrine (*Maneka Gandhi* case), guidelines governing power of arrest (*Armesh Kumar, Vihaan Kumar*), and transitions from CrPC to BNSS statutory provisions.

10. Temporary Pause on UK Chevening Fellowships: Strategic Implications for Indo-UK Soft Power Dynamics

Key Highlights & Summary

- **One-Year Suspension of Key Fellowships:** The UK government has paused three major short-term Chevening Fellowships for mid-career professionals for the 2027–28 academic cycle: CRISP, Cyber Security, and South Asia Journalism Programme (SAJP).
- **Primary Drivers Behind the Pause:** Officials cited UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) cost-cutting, portfolio optimization, and capacity constraints at host institutions like the University of Westminster.
- **Targeted Leadership Cohorts:** The affected programs cater to vital strategic sectors, including Oxford's CRISP (science and entrepreneurship), Cranfield's Cyber Security Fellowship (defense and technology), and SAJP (media collaboration across South Asia).
- **Pivot Toward Alternative Funding:** Chevening India is seeking corporate partnerships and industry sponsorships to sustain cohorts, including the upcoming Chevening Gurukul Fellowship at Oxford.
- **Master's Scholarships Remain Intact:** Full-time, one-year Chevening Master's degree scholarships for 2027–28 remain operational despite long-term overall funding contractions.

Why has the U.K. paused three Chevening fellowships?

What are the three programmes, who do they serve, and what happens next?

Main findings

The story so far: The UK government has paused three short-term fellowships offered for mid-career professionals under the prestigious Chevening programme for one year. The Chevening Research, Science and Innovation Leadership Fellowship (CRISP), the Chevening Cyber Security Fellowship, and the Chevening South Asia Journalism Programme (SAJP) have been paused for the year 2027–28.

Why have the Chevening fellowships been paused? According to official sources, the fellowships have been paused for varying reasons, including capacity constraints and cost-cutting by the UK government. "We are currently reviewing and strengthening our fellowship portfolio to ensure it continues to deliver the greatest impact and value for participants and partners. As part of this process, some programmes will pause in 2027 – a British

High Commission spokesperson confirmed in response to *The Hindu's* queries. "The SAJP will pause for the 2027 cycle due to capacity constraints at the host university, and is expected to resume in 2028," the sources said.

"We recognise this will be disappointing news for those who were hoping to apply, but we hope to be able to provide an update on future plans for the programmes soon," the sources added. What is the nature of the fellowships? The CRISP Fellowship is a 12-week programme for scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs hosted by the University of Oxford. The Chevening Cyber Security Fellowship is a 10-week programme delivered at Cranfield University, a part of the UK's Defence Academy. The SAJP is an eight-week programme hosted by the University of Westminster for mid-career journalists. CRISP focuses on fellows from India and Sri Lanka, the Cyber Security Fellowship is offered to Indians and

citizens of the Western Balkans. The SAJP is a one-of-a-kind programme that brings together journalists from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and the Maldives.

What avenues is Chevening India exploring to restart the fellowships? The Chevening team is exploring industry sponsorship for CRISP and the Cyber Security Fellowship, and welcomes suggestions and potential partners. "We expect to provide an update on the Chevening Gurukul Fellowship (September–November 2027) shortly by early November 2026, and are currently exploring sponsorship opportunities for this programme too," sources said. The Gurukul Fellowship, also hosted at the University of Oxford, is a 10-week programme targeting mid-career Indian professionals across sectors, including government, media, and civil society. How much has the UK government spent on the programmes? A tweet posted in the UK Parliament shows

that in financial year 2025–26, the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) allocated £20.4 million to Chevening. A breakdown of the funding split between fellowships and scholarships is not available in the public domain. The *Hindu's* query to the British High Commission on this went unanswered.

"Through corporate partner income and university partnerships, Chevening receives between £67 million annually, funding 42% of scholars," the UK's then Secretary of State for the FCDO stated in a policy paper presented in the UK Parliament in 2023.

What is the government's purpose? The UK government launched the Chevening Fellowship in 2001 as an extension of the broader Chevening Scholarships, which were established in 1983. For 2027–28, applications for Chevening Scholarships, which offer a fully funded Master's in the UK, have opened. The Chevening programmes function as an instrument of soft diplomacy for the UK. By selecting high-potential international professionals to study in the UK, on the FCDO's fully funded programme, the UK government aims to cultivate influential global networks that advance Britain's foreign policy interests. "Many of Chevening's alumni are in positions of influence, and they form a valuable network for furthering His Majesty's Government's objectives," a policy paper on the programme states.

THE GIST

➤ The UK has paused three Chevening fellowships — CRISP, Cyber Security Fellowship and SAJP — for 2027–28, citing portfolio review, cost-cutting and capacity constraints.

➤ Chevening is exploring industry sponsorship to sustain some programmes, while the pause comes amid a larger sum-draw in the number of scholarships awarded and scrutiny of programmes.

- **Impact on Track II Diplomacy:** The temporary halt disrupts institutionalized people-to-people exchanges, track II diplomatic engagement, and cross-border professional networking between India and the UK.

Essential Definitions

- **Soft Power:** The ability of a nation to influence international outcomes and shape preferences through cultural appeal, educational diplomacy, and shared values rather than coercion.
- **Track II Diplomacy:** Informal, non-governmental interactions between academics, journalists, and professionals aimed at building trust and influencing official policy channels.
- **Chevening Fellowships:** Fully funded short-term professional development programs run by the UK FCDO targeting mid-career leaders in key geopolitical regions.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Constitutional Domain (India):**
 - **Article 51(c) (DPSP):** Directs the State to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations, providing a constitutional anchor for international educational and cultural exchanges.
 - **Seventh Schedule (Union List, Entry 10 & 13):** Grants Parliament exclusive jurisdiction over foreign affairs and international treaties, agreements, and conventions.
- **Bilateral Framework:**
 - **India-UK Roadmap 2030:** A comprehensive bilateral framework designed to elevate ties across defense, trade, climate action, and education through elevated people-to-people connectivity.

Conclusion

The temporary pause on Chevening fellowships highlights the vulnerability of soft power initiatives to budgetary constraints in developed nations. Diversifying funding through public-private partnerships will be vital to sustaining educational diplomacy and protecting long-term bilateral engagement.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its neighborhood relations; Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India; Effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's interests; Role of soft power and diaspora in foreign policy.