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DATE : **AUGUST 29, 2026**



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1. Industrial Growth Slows to 6.7% in July from 8.8% in June

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Moderation in Industrial Output:** India's industrial growth rate moderated to 6.7% in July 2026 compared to 8.8% recorded in June.
- **Second-Highest Growth Trajectory:** Despite the month-on-month slowdown, July's Index of Industrial Production (IIP) expansion represents the second-best performance recorded since December.
- **Manufacturing Sector Support:** The manufacturing sector expanded by 7.3% in July 2026, driven by output in electrical/non-electrical engineering, automobiles, electronics, and rubber products.

- **Upward Revision for June:** The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) upgraded June's IIP growth from a provisional estimate of 7.3% to 8.8%.
- **Divergent Consumption Trends:** Economic data highlights a growing divergence between urban and rural demand dynamics, with weakness lingering across rural consumption levels.
- **Supply-Side Drivers:** Industrial momentum was sustained by electricity, gas supply, and core manufacturing activities offsetting volatile sectoral sub-components.

Essential Definitions

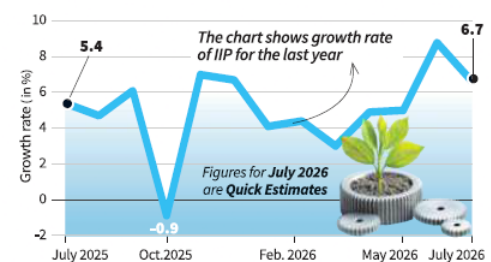
- **Index of Industrial Production (IIP):** An economic indicator that measures short-term volume changes in the output of a chosen basket of industrial products over a specified period.
- **Quick Estimates:** Initial macroeconomic data points compiled and released by MoSPI with a short time lag, subject to subsequent revisions based on complete establishment returns.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **National Statistical Office (NSO) Mandate:** Functions under MoSPI to collect, compile, and disseminate official statistical indicators pursuant to the Collection of Statistics Act, 2008.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003:** Requires tracking high-frequency macroeconomic metrics like IIP to assess revenue projections, industrial capacity, and macroeconomic stability.
- **Entry 64, Union List (Seventh Schedule):** Confers exclusive legislative jurisdiction upon Parliament regarding official national statistics, surveys, and economic census operations.

Growth dips

India's industrial growth rate fell to **6.7% in July 2026**, the second-best growth recorded by the Index since December last year



Source: MOSPI

Conclusion

The July 2026 IIP data reflects resilience in core manufacturing while highlighting structural demand disparities between rural and urban markets. Sustaining long-term industrial momentum requires targeted policy measures to boost rural purchasing power and expand capital goods production.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy—issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, industrial growth, IIP sectoral composition, and manufacturing performance.
- **GS Paper III:** Infrastructure, core sector performance, supply-side bottlenecks, and consumption trends influencing national income accounting.

2. India Signs Javelin Procurement Deal with U.S. to Boost Defence Cooperation

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA):** India signed an LOA with the United States to acquire Javelin anti-tank guided missile (ATGM) systems through the U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) route.
- **Emergency Procurement Mechanism:** The deal is processed under Emergency Procurement (EP) powers delegated to the armed forces to plug critical capability gaps following Operation Sindoor.
- **Financial Delegation Limits:** Under the emergency procurement framework, armed forces headquarters can execute expedited purchases up to ₹300 crore per equipment category.
- **Projected Delivery Timelines:** Initial tranches under the sixth round of emergency procurements (EP-6) are scheduled for delivery to the Indian Army by the end of FY 2026-27.
- **U.S.-India Strategic Partnership:** U.S. Ambassador Sergio Gor highlighted that the contract deepens the bilateral Major Defence Partnership and creates opportunities for future co-production.
- **Operational Capabilities:** The Javelin system provides medium-range anti-armor capability, targeting heavy armored vehicles and fortified enemy positions with high precision.

Essential Definitions

- **Foreign Military Sales (FMS):** The U.S. Government's program for facilitating government-to-government sales of defense equipment, services, and training to foreign nations.
- **Fire-and-Forget Technology:** A missile guidance mechanism that automatically tracks the target using infrared seekers after launch, enabling the gunner to immediately take cover or reposition.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 73 of the Constitution:** Grants executive power to the Union Government over foreign affairs, defense treaties, and strategic international arms procurements.
- **Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP) 2020:** Governs capital acquisitions for the armed forces, outlining specific clauses for Emergency Procurement and Foreign Military Sales (FMS) agreements.
- **U.S. Arms Export Control Act (AECA):** U.S. statutory framework regulating the export and transfer of defense articles and services to foreign partner nations.



Conclusion

The procurement of Javelin missile systems under emergency powers reflects India's proactive strategy to enhance immediate battlefield readiness following operational learnings. Strengthening defense ties with the U.S. through FMS protocols creates pathways for technological integration, co-development, and sustained strategic deterrence.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Security challenges and their management; indigenization of technology, defense acquisitions, and modernization of the Indian Armed Forces.

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional, and global groupings involving India; impact of foreign policies (India-U.S. Major Defence Partnership) on national interests.

3. Can Acting Chief Justices of High Courts Recommend Names for Judicial Appointments?

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Resurgence of Controversy:** The conduct of Rajasthan High Court's Acting Chief Justice, Justice Sanjeev Prakash Sharma, has revived the question of whether Acting Chief Justices (ACJs) should initiate recommendations for High Court judge appointments.
- **SC Collegium Deliberations:** The Supreme Court Collegium, headed by CJI Surya Kant, is examining four recommendations submitted by Justice Sharma during his unusually long tenure of nearly a year.
- **Merit-Based Perspective:** One view within the Collegium holds that recommendations from an Acting CJ should not be rejected solely due to their official designation, provided the candidate meets merit criteria and the ACJ has an extended tenure.
- **Institutional Concerns:** A counter-perspective cautions that accepting nominations from ACJs may normalize prolonged temporary appointments and dilute the urgency of appointing permanent Chief Justices.
- **Historical Precedents:** Conventionally, ACJs avoid initiating recommendations owing to short tenures, though exceptions exist, such as the 2020 Bombay High Court recommendations under then-Acting CJ B.P. Dharmadhikari.
- **Consultative Framework:** In past instances, differences between consultee judges and the High Court leadership led the Centre to return lists, emphasizing the importance of thorough Bar consultations.



Before Supreme Court Collegium: Can Acting Chief Justices of HCs send names for judge appointments?

Essential Definitions

- **Acting Chief Justice (ACJ):** A High Court judge appointed by the President to discharge the administrative and judicial duties of the Chief Justice when the office falls vacant or the incumbent is unable to perform duties.
- **Memorandum of Procedure (MoP):** The set of executive guidelines governing the step-by-step process of judicial appointments and transfers in the Supreme Court and High Courts.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 223 of the Constitution:** Empowers the President to appoint one of the judges of a High Court as Acting Chief Justice when the office of Chief Justice is vacant or during temporary absence.

- **Article 217 of the Constitution:** Mandates that every Judge of a High Court shall be appointed by the President after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the State, and the Chief Justice of the High Court.
- **Second and Third Judges Cases (1993, 1998):** Established the primacy of the Judiciary through the Collegium system, setting procedural norms for consultation and judicial appointments.

Conclusion

The ongoing debate over the administrative powers of Acting Chief Justices highlights the delicate balance between filling judicial vacancies promptly and adhering to established procedural conventions. Clear guidelines within the Memorandum of Procedure regarding ACJ powers are crucial to preserving institutional integrity, eliminating administrative uncertainty, and avoiding long-term temporary tenures.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Indian Constitution—Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions, and responsibilities of the Judiciary (Articles 217, 223, and the Collegium System).
- **GS Paper II:** Structure, organization, and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary; issues relating to judicial vacancies, pendency, and judicial administration.

4. FCNR(B) Deposits Push Forex Reserves to All-Time High of \$729 Billion

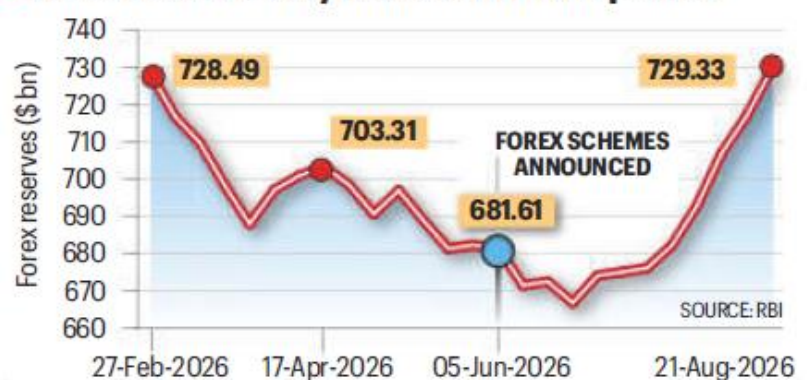
Key Highlights & Summary

- **Record Forex Reserves:** India's foreign exchange reserves reached an all-time high of \$729.33 billion as of August 21, 2026, driven primarily by the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) concessional swap window for Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) [FCNR(B)] deposits.
- **Impact of Geopolitical Pressures:** The previous peak of \$728.49 billion in February 2026 was depleted due to global energy price spikes and imported inflation following West Asia conflict disruptions.

- **Mechanism of FCNR(B) Scheme:** Under the special swap facility introduced on June 8, 2026, the RBI absorbs the exchange rate risk, enabling commercial banks to offer attractive interest rates up to 7.4% to Non-Resident Indians (NRIs).

- **Capital Flow Composition:**
Out of \$72.85 billion attracted through special schemes, FCNR(B) deposits contributed \$65.4 billion, while Overseas Foreign Currency Borrowings and External Commercial Borrowings brought in \$4.86 billion and \$2.59 billion respectively.

• Forex reserves skyrocket on NRI deposits



- **Strengthening Rupee Defense:** Expanded foreign exchange buffers significantly improve the RBI's operational capacity to curb currency volatility amidst ongoing capital outflows (\$24 billion equity outflows in early 2026) and elevated interest rates in advanced economies.
- **Early Scheme Closure:** Convinced that the intervention achieved its objectives ahead of schedule, the RBI decided to close the FCNR(B) swap window early on August 31, 2026.

Essential Definitions

- **FCNR(B) Deposit Account:** A term-deposit scheme allowing NRIs to maintain deposits in designated foreign currencies in Indian banks, insulating depositors against rupee depreciation risks.
- **Concessional Forex Swap Window:** A central bank liquidity mechanism where the RBI exchanges foreign currency for rupees with commercial banks at fixed, subsidized swap rates to incentivize foreign currency inflows.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934:** Section 17 confers statutory authority upon the RBI to hold, buy, and sell foreign exchange assets to stabilize currency value and manage foreign reserves.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** Regulates foreign exchange transactions, external debt structures, and foreign currency accounts held by non-resident individuals and banking units.
- **Union List Entry 36 (Seventh Schedule):** Grants exclusive legislative authority to the Parliament over foreign exchange, currency, coinage, and legal tender regulations.

Conclusion

The strategic execution of the FCNR(B) swap window demonstrates the effectiveness of targeted central bank interventions in mitigating external balance sheet vulnerabilities. Rebuilding forex reserves provides crucial macroeconomic stability, bolsters import cover, and enhances sovereign resilience against global financial volatility.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy—external sector dynamics, Reserve Bank of India operations, foreign exchange reserves management, exchange rate volatility, and balance of payments.
- **GS Paper III:** Capital account management, FDI and FPI trends, inflation management, and macroeconomic stability indicators.

5. Easing of Defence Export SOPs and Framework Reforms

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Unified Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):** The Ministry of Defence has consolidated three existing export SOPs (major platforms/equipment, parts/components, and intra-company technology transfers) into a single unified framework to minimize procedural hurdles.

- **Dispensing Stakeholder Consultations:** Prior stakeholder consultation has been removed for non-lethal exports to most destinations, as well as for all items intended for international tenders and exhibitions to expedite commercial operations.
- **Enhanced OGEL Validity:** The validity period for the Open General Export Licence (OGEL) has been extended from 2 years to 3 years, reducing the compliance burden and renewal frequency for exporters.
- **Geographical Expansion:** OGEL coverage has been expanded from 41 countries to all global destinations, excluding negative or sensitive list nations, arms-embargoed countries, and those under UN Security Council sanctions.
- **Scope Expansion & Civil End-Use Permitted:** The range of items under OGEL has been enlarged, allowing civil end-use exports of specified parts/components of small-calibre arms and protective gear.
- **Self-Generation of Authorisations:** Eligible exporters holding OGEL can self-generate export authorisations for multiple consignments without applying for fresh per-consignment approvals.

Essential Definitions

- **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):** Formalized guidelines issued by the Ministry of Defence governing authorization procedures for export permissions to domestic firms.
- **Open General Export Licence (OGEL):** A standing, one-time export license allowing certified exporters to ship specified items to designated countries repeatedly without requesting separate approvals for every batch.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Regulates India's international trade policies and export permissions, enabling the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) and the Ministry of Defence to issue export guidelines.
- **Special Chemicals, Organisms, Materials, Equipment and Technologies (SCOMET) List:** Operates as India's dual-use export control list aligned with multilateral export control regimes like the Wassenaar Arrangement.
- **Constitutional Provision (Article 73):** Executive power of the Union covers subjects under the Union List (Entry 14: Foreign Affairs; Entry 15: War and Peace; Entry 41: Trade and Commerce with foreign countries).

Conclusion The rationalization of defence export SOPs shifts India's defence ecosystem from a stringent regulatory regime toward a facilitation-led framework. By striking a balance between national security controls and business efficiency, these reforms enhance India's integration into global defence supply chains, supporting domestic manufacturers under the 'Make in India' initiative while striving to achieve national defence export targets.

UPSC Relevance



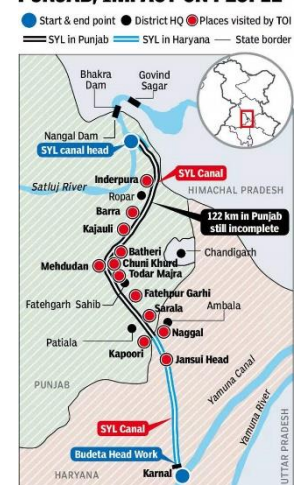
- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development, and Employment; Indigenization of Technology and Developing New Technology; Security Challenges and their Management.

6. Sutlej-Yamuna Link (SYL) Canal Dispute: Punjab vs. Haryana

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Core Issue:** The 214-km long SYL canal project (122 km in Punjab, 92 km in Haryana) aims to share Ravi-Beas river waters. While Haryana has completed its portion, Punjab's construction remains halted due to acute water stress, groundwater depletion, and agrarian opposition.
- **Historical Allocations:** The dispute traces back to water allocation agreements, including the 1981 tripartite agreement that reallocated surplus Ravi-Beas waters assessed at 17.17 Million Acre Feet (MAF) between Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan.
- **Riparian vs. Successor Rights:** Punjab relies legally on the riparian principle, asserting primary rights over rivers flowing through its territory, whereas Haryana demands its share as a successor state based on central pacts and judicial orders.
- **Legislative Escalation & Invalidations:** In 2004, Punjab enacted the Punjab Termination of Agreements Act to annul previous water-sharing pacts, which was subsequently declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2016.
- **Groundwater Exploitation:** Roughly 73–76% of Punjab's agricultural blocks are classified as overexploited, driving its stance that no surplus water exists for external transfer to Haryana or Rajasthan.
- **Ravi-Beas Water Tribunal (Eradi Tribunal):** Established under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956, the tribunal continues field inspections to re-verify water availability, river inflows, and actual basin coverage.

CHARTING THE SYL THROUGH PUNJAB, IMPACT ON PEOPLE



Essential Definitions

- **Riparian Rights:** A legal principle granting landowners or states whose property adjoins a natural water body the primary right to use that water.
- **Million Acre Feet (MAF):** A unit of volume used in water resource management, equivalent to the volume of water required to cover one acre of land to a depth of one foot.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 262:** Empowers Parliament to adjudicate disputes relating to the use, distribution, or control of waters of inter-state rivers or river valleys, excluding Supreme Court jurisdiction when an inter-state tribunal is mandated.
- **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956:** Enacted under Article 262 to set up ad-hoc tribunals (e.g., Eradi Tribunal) for binding adjudication of inter-state river disputes.

- **Entry 17 (State List) vs. Entry 56 (Union List):** Entry 17 gives states jurisdiction over water supplies, irrigation, and canals, subject to Entry 56 of the Union List governing regulation and development of inter-state rivers.

Conclusion The SYL canal dispute illustrates the tension between legal entitlement and ecological reality in India's federal structure. Resolving the deadlock requires moving beyond political brinkmanship toward collaborative water governance, adopting modern hydrological assessments, and prioritizing sustainable agricultural water use in both states.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, inter-state dispute resolution mechanisms, and constitutional provisions (Article 262).
- **GS Paper III:** Water resource management, agricultural irrigation challenges, environmental degradation, and depletion of groundwater levels.

7. India-China Bilateral Dynamics: Strategic Wariness and Boundary CBMs

Key Highlights & Summary

- **25th Special Representatives (SR) Talks:** National Security Adviser Ajit Doval met Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Beijing, resulting in an eight-point joint consensus aimed at stabilizing bilateral ties ahead of multilateral summits (SCO and BRICS).
- **Early and Substantial Harvest:** Both nations agreed to push for early progress on boundary delimitation and mapping without prejudice to the final settlement under the 2005 Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles.
- **Expansion of Military CBMs:** The agreement establishes two new military meeting points and two new border hotlines in the Eastern (Arunachal Pradesh) and Middle (Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand) sectors, expanding Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) beyond the Western sector (Ladakh).
- **Trans-Border River Mechanism:** An Expert-Level Mechanism on trans-border rivers will be strengthened to manage shared hydrological data, alongside agreements to facilitate the Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra and resume border trade.
- **Pragmatic Diplomatic Neutrality:** The joint consensus deliberately avoids contentious geopolitical vocabulary—omitting direct reference to "Tibet/Xizang" and using dual naming conventions for shared geographical features (Kailash/Gang Rinpoche and Manasarovar/Mapam Yun Tso).
- **Calibrated Tactical Ambiguity:** Despite joint alignment on procedural CBMs and multilateral forums like BRICS, structural strategic wariness persists due to ongoing border disputes and trade asymmetries.



Essential Definitions

- **Confidence Building Measures (CBMs):** Planned military and diplomatic actions intended to increase trust, prevent unintended escalation, and reduce miscalculations along disputed frontiers.
- **Special Representatives (SR) Mechanism:** High-level institutional dialogue established in 2003 between designated representatives of India and China to explore a political framework for boundary settlement.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **2005 Agreement on Political Parameters:** Guides the overall framework for resolving the India-China boundary question through peaceful negotiation.
- **1993 & 1996 Border Agreements:** Agreements on Maintaining Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and Military Field CBMs.
- **Article 73 & Executive Powers:** Covers the Union Executive's prerogative in negotiating international treaties, border management, and foreign affairs under Entry 14 of the Union List.

Conclusion The outcomes of the 25th SR meeting demonstrate a pragmatic approach where operational CBMs are deployed to manage risk without resolving foundational territorial divergence. In India-China diplomacy, persistent wariness remains integral to foreign policy execution, balancing border stability with broader strategic autonomy.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its Neighborhood- Relations; Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Security Challenges and their Management in Border Areas; Role of External State and Non-State Actors in Creating Challenges to Internal Security.

8. Ethanol Blending Programme: Grain Reliance and Structural Challenges

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Shift to Grain-Based Feedstocks:** India's Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) programme has transitioned from sugarcane molasses to grain-based feedstocks, with grains expected to account for 72.5% of total ethanol supply for E20 targets.
- **Diversion of Food Grains:** Heavy reliance on maize and subsidized rice from Food Corporation of India (FCI) stocks raises serious concerns regarding food security, livestock feed availability, and regional water resource depletion.
- **Sugarcane Diversion Restrictions:** Government caps on diverting sugar for ethanol production to stabilize domestic sugar prices have forced distilleries to heavily depend on grain inputs rather than B-heavy molasses or cane juice.
- **Ecological Strain:** Utilizing water-intensive crops like rice for biofuel conversion undermines agricultural sustainability and distorts market prices for essential food commodities.

- **Alternative Feedstock Imperative:** Transitioning to climate-resilient, low-water crops like bajra and jowar (millets) provides a viable alternative, offering 58–62% starch recovery and yielding 380–400 litres of ethanol per tonne.
- **Policy Recalibration Need:** Experts advocate for realistic blending timelines and targets (e.g., stabilizing at E10 or E15) rather than rushing ambitious E20 blending goals without sustainable raw material security.

Essential Definitions

- **Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme:** An initiative to blend bio-ethanol with petrol to reduce fossil fuel imports, lower carbon emissions, and provide remunerative prices to agricultural producers.
- **First-Generation (1G) Biofuels:** Biofuels produced directly from food crops such as sugarcane, maize, broken rice, and wheat starch.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **National Policy on Biofuels (2018):** Provides the regulatory framework for expanding eligible feedstocks for biofuel production while safeguarding national food security requirements.
- **Essential Commodities Act, 1955:** Regulates the supply, distribution, and price movement of essential agricultural commodities, including sugarcane, sugar, and food grains.
- **Constitutional Provision (Article 48A & Article 21):** Mandates environmental protection and sustainable resource utilization to ensure ecological balance and clean energy transitions under fundamental rights.

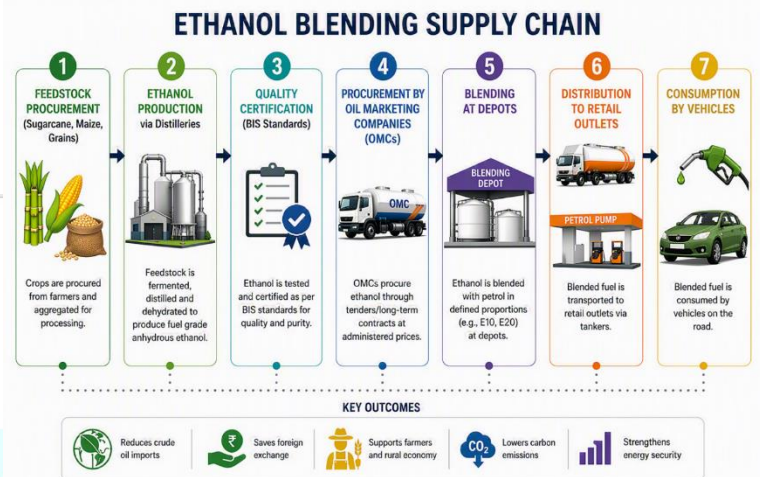
Conclusion While the EBP programme successfully enhanced farmer liquidity and reduced crude import dependence, its structural shift toward grain reliance threatens food security and environmental sustainability. A balanced recalibration focusing on climate-resilient coarse grains, 2G cellulosic ethanol, and realistic blending targets is vital for long-term viability.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.
- **GS Paper III:** Major crops and cropping patterns; issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System; Conservation, environmental pollution, and degradation.

9. Social Media Addictive Design and Child Safety: Meta Settlement & Regulatory Implications

Key Highlights & Summary



- **Landmark US Settlement:** Meta agreed to pay up to \$17 billion over a decade to settle claims by 47 US states and territories regarding addictive platform design, misleading the public on youth mental health harms, and improper data collection from children under 13.
- **Mandatory Product Design Reforms:** The agreement mandates structural product changes for users under 18, including a default 2-hour daily combined limit for Facebook/Instagram, midnight-to-6 AM app access blocks, muted notifications during school hours (8 AM to 3 PM), non-algorithmic feed options, and hidden 'like' counts.
- **Shift from Voluntary Safety to Architecture Controls:** Unlike soft safety features, the settlement legally enforces platform-level changes directly into product architecture, creating a global precedent for moving beyond self-regulation.
- **Indian Regulatory Deliberations:** Indian policy makers are studying the US consent decree as a potential blueprint to evaluate platform liability, age-based access restrictions, screen-time caps, and mandatory parental consent frameworks.
- **Mental Health & Algorithmic Impact:** Meta-analyses highlight strong links between excessive social media usage and adolescent depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and sleep disruptions driven by quantified social feedback loops (likes, share metrics) and infinite scrolling.
- **Independent Oversight & Compliance:** Meta must hire an independent auditor for five years to assess compliance with the mandated safety safeguards, setting accountability measures for big-tech platforms.



Essential Definitions

- **Addictive Design (Dark Patterns):** User interface design choices—such as infinite scroll, push notifications, autoplay, and quantified social metrics—engineered to maximize user engagement by exploiting psychological reward mechanisms.
- **Consent Judgment:** A binding legal agreement approved by a court between disputing parties that outlines agreed actions or restrictions without requiring a formal admission of liability.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023:** Section 9 mandates data fiduciaries to obtain verifiable parental consent before processing personal data of children and restricts tracking, behavioral monitoring, or targeted advertising directed at minors.
- **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021:** Outlines due diligence requirements for social media intermediaries to ensure user safety and prevent online harm.
- **Constitutional Provision (Article 21 & Article 39(f)):** Guarantees the right to life, personal liberty, and mental well-being under Article 21, aligned with Directive Principles under Article 39(f) to protect children against exploitation and moral/material abandonment.

Conclusion The Meta settlement marks a paradigm shift in big-tech accountability by targeting core algorithmic architecture rather than relying on voluntary user settings. For developing

regulatory frameworks like India's, legally mandated safety-by-design principles offer a structured approach to safeguarding youth mental health while maintaining digital inclusion.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors; Issues relating to the development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, and Human Resources.
- **GS Paper III:** Challenges to internal security through communication networks; Role of media and social networking sites in security challenges; Basics of cyber security; Regulation of Artificial Intelligence and digital platforms.

10. PM Visit to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyz Republic: Strategic Importance of Central Asia

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Diplomatic High-Level Visit:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertakes a visit to Uzbekistan for a bilateral exchange and the Kyrgyz Republic (Bishkek) to attend the 26th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of State summit.
- **Connect Central Asia Policy:** The visit reflects India's sustained commitment under its "Connect Central Asia" policy, treating the five Central Asian Republics (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) as part of its extended neighborhood.
- **Energy and Resource Potential:** Central Asia possesses critical natural resources essential for India's energy security, including massive uranium reserves in Kazakhstan, natural gas in Turkmenistan, and rich mineral wealth (gold, coal, iron ore, hydro-power) across Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and the Kyrgyz Republic.
- **Geopolitical Balancing & Countering Dominance:** Active engagement allows India to secure strategic space in a region heavily influenced by China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and post-Soviet Russian ties, while mitigating security threats from Taliban-led Afghanistan and regional radicalism.
- **Connectivity Bottlenecks:** Direct overland access remains hampered by Pakistan's refusal of transit access, driving India to prioritize alternative corridors such as Chabahar Port in Iran and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).
- **Deep Civilisational Footprint:** India shares historical links dating back to the Kushana era (evidenced by the Kara Tepa Buddhist site in Termez, Uzbekistan), shared linguistic vocabulary, and robust trade relations, with India-Uzbekistan trade approaching \$1 billion in 2025-26.

Essential Definitions

- **Extended Neighbourhood Policy:** A foreign policy doctrine where India builds comprehensive strategic, economic, and security ties with regions beyond its immediate geographical borders, such as Central Asia, West Asia, and Southeast Asia.
- **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):** A 7,200-km multi-modal transportation network (ship, rail, road) designed to move freight between India, Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Mandates the State to promote international peace and security, maintain just and honorable relations between nations, and foster respect for international law and treaty obligations.
- **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Charter:** The foundational legal framework of the SCO (which India joined as a full member in 2017) aimed at strengthening mutual trust, security cooperation, regional counter-terrorism, and trade integration.

Conclusion India's proactive outreach toward Central Asia underscores the region's pivotal position at the crossroads of Eurasia. By combining infrastructure integration via Chabahar and INSTC with multilateral diplomatic platforms like the SCO, India effectively balances great-power dynamics while bolstering national security, trade resilience, and energy diversification.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its Neighborhood- Relations; Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Energy Security; Infrastructure: Ports, Roads, and Freight Corridors; Security Challenges and their Management in Border Areas.

11. Transboundary Ecological Disasters and Himalayan Climate Vulnerability

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Himalayan Glacial Collapse Event:** On August 26, 2026, a high-altitude glacial collapse along the Nepal-China border triggered massive flash floods and mudslides, registering a seismic force equivalent to a 5.2 magnitude event.
- **Severe Infrastructure Damage:** The disaster destroyed critical infrastructure, including China's Gyirong Port land trade hub, Nepal's transport networks, and 475 MW of generating capacity on Nepal's power grid.
- **Transboundary Human Impact:** The calamity caused massive casualties across Nepal and China, leaving hundreds missing—including over 170 Indian pilgrims visiting Mount Kailash.
- **Downstream Flood Risks:** Floodwaters surged through the Bhotekoshi-Trishuli-Narayani system into the Gandak, Kosi, and Ganga rivers in India, prompting high alerts and NDRF deployment across Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Indian Emergency Relief Outreach:** India activated extensive Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations, dispatching over 47.5 tonnes of emergency supplies via the Indian Air Force to Nepal.
- **Need for Trilateral Cooperation:** The crisis highlights that ecological hazards transcend geopolitical rivalries, necessitating institutional cross-border flood forecasting and data sharing among India, Nepal, and China.

Essential Definitions

- **Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) / Glacial Collapse:** Sudden release of immense volumes of water, ice, and moraine sediment resulting from the structural failure of a glacier or natural ice dam.
- **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR):** Military or civilian operations deployed to alleviate suffering during natural or man-made disasters, serving as a core component of regional diplomacy.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Disaster Management Act, 2005:** Institutionalizes India's national disaster response mechanism, empowering the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) for domestic emergencies and cross-border HADR operations.
- **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015–2030):** International agreement emphasizing transboundary cooperation, early warning systems, and resilient infrastructure.
- **Constitutional Provision (Article 21 & Article 51(c)):** Guarantees life protection and environmental security under Article 21, aligned with Article 51(c) promoting international law compliance and treaty-based disaster management cooperation.

Conclusion The 2026 Himalayan border disaster underscores the severe climate vulnerability of the Hindu Kush-Himalaya region. Establishing formal trilateral disaster risk reduction frameworks, real-time hydrological data sharing, and joint early-warning infrastructure between India, Nepal, and China is essential to protect ecological security and human lives downstream.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** India and its Neighborhood- Relations; Bilateral, regional and global groupings; Effect of policies of developing countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Disaster and Disaster Management; Environmental Pollution and Degradation; Conservation and Environmental Impact Assessment.

12. India-Canada Economic and Financial Dialogue: Trade & Investment Roadmap

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Target Timeline for CEPA:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and Canadian Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne recommitted to concluding the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) negotiations by the end of 2026.
- **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT):** India expressed readiness to initiate formal negotiations on a Bilateral Investment Treaty at the earliest to safeguard mutual institutional capital flows.
- **Trade Target:** The dialogue aligns with commitments to boost bilateral trade to 4.65 lakh crore (around \$50 billion) by 2030, rising from 70,354 crore recorded in 2025-26.
- **Inaugural Finance Dialogue:** Held in Toronto, the meeting marked the conclusion of the inaugural India-Canada Economic and Financial Dialogue to expand commercial linkages and financial institution engagement.

- **Canadian Pension Fund Attraction:** India specifically pitched for enhanced capital inflows from Canadian pension funds, tying opportunities to India's National Monetisation Pipeline established for infrastructure assets.
- **Strategic Economic Realignment:** Both ministers highlighted that current global economic uncertainty makes bilateral economic partnerships increasingly vital for securing resilient supply chains and long-term investment.

Essential Definitions

- **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):** A free trade agreement encompassing trade in goods, services, investment, intellectual property rights, and regulatory cooperation.
- **Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT):** An agreement between two countries establishing terms and conditions for private investment by nationals and companies of one state in another state, protecting investor rights.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 73 & Executive Power:** Empowers the Union Executive to negotiate, sign, and ratify bilateral economic treaties and international trade pacts.
- **Foreign Trade (Development and Regulation) Act, 1992:** Governs foreign trade development and provides executive authority to implement international trade agreements.
- **Union List (Entry 41 & Entry 14):** Entry 41 covers Trade and Commerce with foreign countries, while Entry 14 grants authority over treaties and international agreements.

Conclusion The commitment to seal CEPA by end-2026 demonstrates pragmatic economic re-engagement between India and Canada. By leveraging institutional capital from Canadian pension funds into India's infrastructure asset pipeline, both nations aim to expand commercial ties while providing structured investor protection under a future Bilateral Investment Treaty.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II:** Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests; Effect of policies and politics of developed countries on India's interests.
- **GS Paper III:** Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development, and employment; Investment models and foreign capital inflows.