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1. West Asia Escalation and UNGA Address by Israeli PM

Key Highlights & Summary

- **UNGA Address:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, defending military actions against Iran and characterizing the strike as an essential decision for national defense.
- **Mass Walkout at UNGA:** A significant number of global delegates staged a coordinated walkout as the Israeli Prime Minister approached the podium, protesting ongoing military actions and alleged war crimes.
- **Rejection of Accusations:** Netanyahu rejected international accusations of genocide and criticized leaders who condemned Israel publicly while allegedly supporting actions against Iranian nuclear infrastructure privately.

- **Escalation in the West Bank:** A vehicular ramming attack occurred near the Beit Horon settlement in the occupied West Bank, gravely injuring an Israeli military reservist, underscoring ongoing violent tensions in the region.
- **Diplomatic Standoff:** The Palestinian Mission to the UN coordinated a collective walkout among member states to signal international opposition to unilateral military escalations and occupied territory policies.

Essential Definitions

- **Right of Self-Defense:** A fundamental principle in international law granting nations the inherent right to individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs.
- **Occupied Territories:** Lands under the military control of a foreign state, governed by specific international humanitarian norms and conventions.
- **War Crimes:** Serious violations of international humanitarian law committed during armed conflict, subject to individual criminal responsibility under global legal statutes.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 51 of the UN Charter:** Recognizes the inherent right of individual or collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a UN member state until the Security Council takes necessary measures.
- **Fourth Geneva Convention (1949):** Establishes humanitarian protections for civilian populations in war zones and occupied territories, prohibiting collective punishment and unlawful destruction of property.
- **Rome Statute of the ICC:** Defines jurisdiction over grave international crimes, including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression.
- **Indian Constitutional Perspective (Article 51):** Article 51 of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) mandates India to promote international peace and security, maintain just relations between nations, and foster respect for international law.

Conclusion

The ongoing friction at the United Nations reflects deep geopolitical divisions regarding West Asia. Balancing national security imperatives with international humanitarian law remains a critical challenge, requiring robust multilateral diplomatic engagement to prevent regional destabilization and safeguard humanitarian standards.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Key for topics involving bilateral, regional, and global groupings affecting India's interests, functioning of the UN System, and international treaties.
- **GS Paper II (Polity):** Relevant to Article 51 of the Indian Constitution regarding foreign policy objectives and commitment to international peace.
- **Ethics (GS Paper IV):** Provides material for discussing international ethics, state behavior during armed conflicts, and the ethical dimensions of unilateral military actions versus diplomatic solutions.

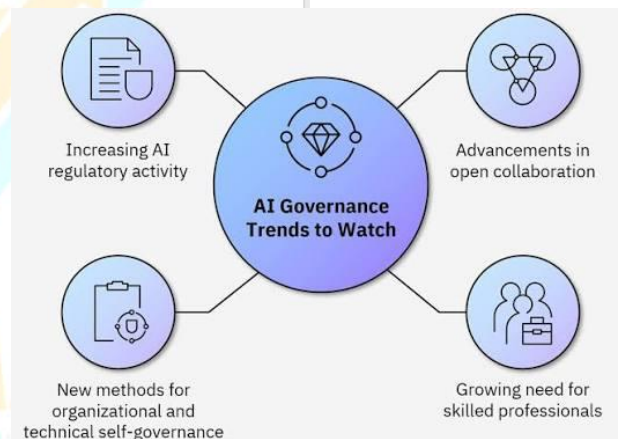
2. Global Governance and Risk Regulation of Emerging AI Technologies

Key Highlights & Summary

- **UN Security Council Briefing:** Leaders of major artificial intelligence companies addressed the United Nations Security Council to call for international regulation and global safeguards regarding rapidly advancing AI systems.
- **Existential Risk Warnings:** Industry executives highlighted risks such as losing control of autonomous models and the threat of AI being utilized in the creation of biological weapons if managed improperly.
- **Prevention of Monopolization:** Tech leaders urged world bodies to ensure that critical AI power and capabilities do not become concentrated within a single company or nation.
- **Divergence on Global Oversight:** Divergent geopolitical views emerged during deliberations, with the US advocating for sovereign national governance and permissionless innovation over unified global regulatory structures.
- **Strategic Geopolitical Competition:** Technological rivalries, particularly between the US and China, highlight the challenge of establishing uniform international standards while balancing national economic and security interests.

Essential Definitions

- **Frontier AI Models:** Highly capable, large-scale foundation models that possess advanced cognitive abilities and potential dual-use risks across cyber and biological domains.
- **Existential Risk (X-Risk):** Threats posed by uncontrolled technological developments that could result in permanent severe damage or loss of human control over critical global infrastructure.
- **Dual-Use Technology:** Technologies capable of serving both benign civilian functions and harmful military or offensive applications.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Information Technology Act, 2000 (India):** Provides the core primary legal structure governing digital infrastructure, cyber offenses, electronic governance, and data security standards.
- **Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023:** Establishes statutory compliance requirements for processing digital personal data while balancing individual privacy rights with lawful data processing needs.
- **National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence (#AIforAll):** Formulated by NITI Aayog to foster inclusive development, ethical deployment, and regulatory sandboxing across key social and economic sectors.
- **Indian Constitutional Provisions:**

- **Article 21 (Right to Privacy & Life):** Extended via judicial precedents to cover protection against algorithmic bias, privacy breaches, and automated decision-making risks.
- **Article 51(c):** Directs the State to foster respect for international law and treaty obligations in global governance frameworks.

Conclusion

The dialogue at the UN Security Council underscores the imperative of establishing balanced AI governance mechanisms. Harmonizing international consensus on safety standards with national regulatory autonomy is critical to mitigating existential risks while promoting equitable innovation.

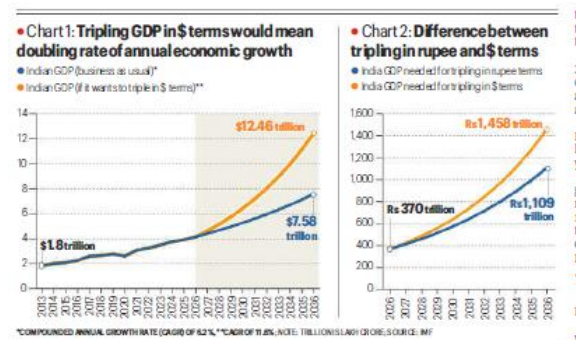
UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Science & Technology):** Crucial for analyzing developments in AI, awareness in the fields of IT, potential safety risks, and regulatory frameworks.
- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Relevant for examining global governance institutions, international treaties, and bilateral tech rivalries.
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics):** Material for evaluating ethical implications of emerging technology, technological determinism, and responsible governance.

3. Structural Requirements for Tripling the Size of the Indian Economy

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Current Economic Scale:** India's current Gross Domestic Product (GDP) stands at approximately 4.2 trillion USD, with long-term policy vision aiming for a 30 trillion USD target under the Viksit Bharat 2047 initiative.
- **Currency Base Disparity:** Achieving economic expansion differs significantly depending on whether calculations use Indian Rupee (INR) terms or US Dollar (USD) terms due to annual exchange rate depreciations.
- **Growth Trajectory in USD Terms:** To triple the GDP to 12.46 trillion USD within ten years, India requires a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 11.6% in dollar terms, nearly double its historical 6.2% rate achieved between 2014 and 2026.
- **Required Nominal INR Growth:** Meeting the 11.6% USD growth rate implies sustaining an annual nominal GDP growth rate in Rupee terms of roughly 14.7%, assuming continuous currency depreciation trends.
- **Foreign Investor Returns:** For international investors, returns depend on USD valuations; currency depreciation can offset nominal Rupee growth unless hedged by productivity gains.



Essential Definitions

- **Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** The total monetary or market value of all finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period.

- **Nominal vs Real GDP:** Nominal GDP measures economic output at current market prices without adjusting for inflation, whereas Real GDP adjusts for price changes over time.
- **Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR):** The annualized mean rate of geometric growth over a specified period longer than one year.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 112 of the Indian Constitution:** Mandates the presentation of the Annual Financial Statement (Union Budget) before Parliament, laying the foundation for public expenditure and growth strategy.
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, 2003:** Institutionalizes fiscal discipline, requiring the government to manage public debt and contain fiscal deficits to ensure macroeconomic stability.
- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** Regulates foreign exchange transactions and cross-border investments, impacting capital inflows essential for long-term growth.
- **NITI Aayog Policy Mandate:** Acts as the premier policy think tank tasked with framing long-term economic development roadmaps and cooperative federalism strategies.

Conclusion

Tripling the size of India's economy within a decade requires a substantial acceleration in economic output and fiscal expansion. Bridging the gap between domestic growth and international dollar targets necessitates structural reforms, export competitiveness, and robust capital accumulation to offset systemic currency depreciation risks.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper III (Indian Economy):** Essential for topics related to economic growth, development, planning, mobilization of resources, and macroeconomic indicators.
- **GS Paper III (Investment Models):** Relevant for analyzing foreign direct investment dynamics, currency risk impacts, and capital market performance.
- **GS Paper II (Governance & Policy):** Important for evaluating state capacity, long-term strategic policy framing, and national development goals.

4. The 'Enemy State' Clauses in UN Charter and Proposals for Deletion

Key Highlights & Summary

- **UNGA Address:** Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi of Japan called on the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to formally delete obsolete "enemy state" references from the UN Charter.
- **Historical Context:** Paragraph 2 of Article 53 defines an "enemy state" as any nation that was an enemy of a signatory state during World War II, specifically targeting defeated Axis powers including Japan, Germany, and Italy.
- **Enforcement Powers:** Article 107 of the UN Charter allows Allied powers to initiate enforcement actions against former enemy states without obtaining prior approval from the UN Security Council (UNSC).

- **Geopolitical Exploitation:** Neighboring powers, including China and Russia, have invoked these legacy provisions to criticize Japan's defense spending increases and invalidate territorial claims over disputed areas like the Kuril Islands.
- **Obstacles to Amendment:** Although UNGA resolutions in 1995 and 2005 recognized these clauses as obsolete, formal deletion requires charter amendment, which faces resistance due to the veto powers and domestic ratification requirements of the permanent five (P5) members.

Essential Definitions

- **Enemy State Clauses:** Specific articles in the UN Charter (Articles 53 and 107) framed post-World War II to prevent the re-emergence of militarism among Axis powers without requiring UNSC authorization.
- **Charter Amendment Process:** The legal procedure under Article 108 of the UN Charter requiring a two-thirds vote in the General Assembly and ratification by two-thirds of UN members, including all P5 states.
- **Multilateral Obsolescence:** A legal condition where statutory provisions remain textually present within international treaties despite losing operative relevance or applicability due to changed political realities.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 53 & Article 107 of UN Charter:** Provide explicit legal exceptions to general UNSC authorization requirements for military enforcement actions against World War II enemy states.
- **Article 108 of UN Charter:** Outlines the mandatory procedure for amending the Charter, conferring individual veto powers on each P5 member state during the domestic ratification stage.
- **Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution:** Clause in Japan's post-war constitution renouncing war as a sovereign right and restricting offensive military capabilities.
- **Indian Position on Security Council Reform:** India supports comprehensive UN Charter amendments to modernize governance structures, eliminate obsolete clauses, and expand permanent UNSC membership to reflect contemporary geopolitical realities.



Conclusion

The persistence of "enemy state" clauses highlights structural rigidities within the United Nations framework. Eliminating obsolete language requires broader institutional reforms that align the UN Charter with modern international law and contemporary global power dynamics.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Critical for understanding UN system architecture, structural reforms of multilateral organizations, and security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region.

- **GS Paper II (International Treaties & Conventions):** Relevant to international legal instruments, Charter amendment procedures, and sovereignty issues.
- **GS Paper II (India and its Neighborhood):** Important for analyzing global strategic shifts, P5 political dynamics, and regional stability in East Asia.

5. Recommendation by CIC for Reinstating Paper-Wise Marks Disclosure in UPSC CSE

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Recommendation by CIC:** The Central Information Commission (CIC) has recommended the reinstatement of detailed paper-wise marks publication for selected candidates in the Civil Services (Main) Examination.
- **Absence of Policy Order:** The CIC observed that the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) had no official record, file noting, or policy decision explaining why paper-wise disclosure was halted after 2017.
- **Contradictory Bureaucratic Stance:** The proceedings revealed conflicting claims between UPSC and DoPT regarding data custody; UPSC stated detailed marks are forwarded to DoPT and LBSNAA, while DoPT claimed they are maintained solely by UPSC.
- **Impact on Aspirants:** Since 2018, only aggregate scores have been released publicly, hindering candidates' ability to evaluate subject-wise evaluation trends across General Studies and optional subjects.
- **Focus on Transparency:** The CIC emphasized that subject-wise disclosure is necessary to ensure fair selection standards, institutional accountability, and informed optional subject choices for future candidates.



Essential Definitions

- **Central Information Commission (CIC):** A statutory body established under the RTI Act, 2005, mandated to adjudicate appeals and enforce transparency standards across public authorities.
- **Information Disclosure Advisory:** A formal directive issued under Section 25(5) of the RTI Act recommending reforms in public authority practices to align with transparency principles.
- **Administrative Custody:** The legal and procedural responsibility assigned to a specific department or institution for storing, managing, and maintaining official records.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Section 25(5) of Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005:** Empowers the Information Commission to issue formal recommendations to public authorities if their record management or disclosure practices fail to conform with the spirit of the Act.
- **Section 8 of RTI Act, 2005:** Outlines explicit exemptions from disclosure, including confidential state records and personal information having no public interest nexus.

- **Article 315 to Article 323 of Indian Constitution:** Defines the structure, functions, and constitutional independence of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).
- **Article 19(1)(a) of Indian Constitution:** Guarantees Freedom of Speech and Expression, from which the Supreme Court derived the fundamental right to information in landmark rulings such as *State of UP v. Raj Narain*.

Conclusion

The CIC's recommendation underlines the importance of procedural transparency and administrative accountability within statutory recruitment processes. Resolving inter-departmental custody ambiguities will strengthen institutional credibility and assist civil service aspirants in making evidence-based strategic decisions.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance):** Highly relevant for topics covering transparency, institutional accountability, the Right to Information (RTI) Act, and public service reforms.
- **GS Paper II (Polity):** Essential for understanding the constitutional status, functions, and operational autonomy of the Union Public Service Commission.
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics & Governance):** Useful material for discussions on ethical governance, administrative transparency, public trust, and open government principles.

6. Assam Compulsory Registration of Muslim Marriages and Divorces Framework

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Mandatory Registration Approved:** The Assam Cabinet approved the Assam Muslim Marriage Registration (Compulsory) Rules, 2026, operationalizing the statutory registration framework under the Assam Compulsory Registration of Muslim Marriages and Divorces Act, 2024.
- **Repeal of Colonial Legislation:** The 2024 Act officially replaces the outdated colonial-era Assam Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Act of 1935.
- **State Control replacing Kazis:** The new law shifts registration authority from licensed Muslim registrars (qazis) directly to government registration officials.
- **Eradication of Child Marriage:** The Act enforces minimum legal marriageable ages—18 for women and 21 for men—specifically eliminating loopholes that allowed child marriages under traditional rules.
- **Procedural Safeguards:** Registration requires identity, age, and residence proofs, along with a mandatory 30-day public notice period for receiving objections before final registration.
- **Protection of Women's Rights:** The reform aims to create an authentic documentary record of marriages, ensuring free consent, safeguarding women's rights, and preventing prohibited relationship violations.



Essential Definitions

- **Muslim Registrar (Qazi):** Traditionally licensed individuals under personal law statutes empowered to perform and record marriages and divorces within the community.
- **Compulsory Registration:** A legally binding mandate requiring every marriage to be formally registered with designated state authorities to acquire legal validity and proof.
- **Prohibited Degrees of Relationship:** Legal or customary boundaries that specify relations between individuals who are barred by law from marrying each other.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 44 (Directive Principles of State Policy):** Mandates the State to endeavor to secure a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) for citizens throughout India. Standardizing personal law procedures aligns with this constitutional goal.
- **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty):** Encompasses the right to choose a life partner, free consent, and protection of legal rights of spouses (particularly women) against forced or underage marriages.
- **Article 15 (Prohibition of Discrimination):** Authorizes the State to make special provisions for women and children to ensure protection against social vulnerabilities such as child marriage.
- **Concurrent List (Entry 5, Schedule VII):** Grants Parliament and State Legislatures concurrent jurisdiction over matters including marriage, divorce, and personal laws.
- **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006:** A statutory enactments overriding personal laws to mandate strict minimum legal ages for marriage across all communities.

Conclusion

The enactment of the 2024 Act and its 2026 procedural rules marks a major step toward legal modernization, secularization of administrative procedures, and social reform in Assam. By transitioning marriage registration from traditional qazis to state officials and enforcing statutory age limits, the legislation strengthens gender justice and documentary transparency while curtailing child marriage practices.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance, Polity, and Social Justice):** Relevant under topics covering Welfare schemes/laws for vulnerable sections (women and children), mechanisms for protection of rights, Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 44 - UCC), and Legislative powers under Schedule VII.

7. Haryana Plans Parali Protection Force to Check Stubble Burning

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Deployment of Dedicated Force:** Haryana plans to deploy a 'Parali Protection Force' comprising police personnel, agriculture department officials, and administrative officers at district and block levels to curb paddy stubble burning.

- **Surveillance and Surveillance Technology:** The state will intensify late-evening patrolling and deploy drones to monitor farm fires across districts during the paddy harvesting season.
- **Financial Incentives for Farmers:** Farmers are offered an incentive of ₹1,200 per acre for optimal utilization of crop residue management (CRM) machinery alongside subsidies on equipment purchases.
- **Three-Tier Enforcement Action:** Verified stubble burning instances will trigger three strict penalties: FIR registration, a monetary challan, and a "red entry" in the farmer's official land record.
- **Inter-District Machinery Mobility:** The state government plans to shift balers, rakers, and key CRM machinery dynamically between districts aligned with local paddy harvesting schedules.
- **Environmental Compensation:** Environmental compensation charges will be imposed and recovered directly from violators to comply with Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) directives.

Essential Definitions

- **Stubble Burning (Parali Burning):** The practice of intentionally setting fire to straw stubble that remains after harvesting grains like paddy to rapidly clear fields for the next crop cycle.
- **Red Entry in Land Records:** A restrictive administrative marking on a farmer's official land ownership record that blocks access to government crop procurement benefits, subsidies, or agricultural loans.
- **Crop Residue Management (CRM):** In-situ (on-farm) or ex-situ (off-farm) techniques and mechanical solutions used to manage agricultural waste without resorting to open field burning.



Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 21 (Right to Clean Environment):** The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that the right to live in a pollution-free environment and breathe clean air is an integral component of the fundamental Right to Life.
- **Article 48A (Directive Principles):** Directs the State to protect and improve the environment and safeguard forests and wildlife across the country.
- **Article 51A(g) (Fundamental Duties):** Imposes a duty on every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment, including forests, lakes, rivers, and wildlife.
- **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) Act, 2021:** Provides statutory powers to monitor, execute, and enforce measures preventing air pollution caused by stubble burning across National Capital Region (NCR) and adjoining areas.
- **Section 288 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) / Section 188 IPC:** Enables penal action against individuals disobeying orders lawfully promulgated by public servants, including stubble burning bans.

Conclusion

Haryana's dual approach combining preventive surveillance, severe punitive disincentives, and direct financial incentives aims to tackle winter smog in NCR effectively. Enforcing administrative penalties while facilitating machinery access provides a balanced template for sustainable agricultural waste management.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Public Policy):** Administrative enforcement mechanisms, Inter-state coordination, and CAQM statutory mandates.
- **GS Paper III (Environment & Agriculture):** Environmental pollution and degradation, Air Quality Index (AQI) dynamics in Indo-Gangetic Plains, sustainable crop residue management technologies, and farm economics.

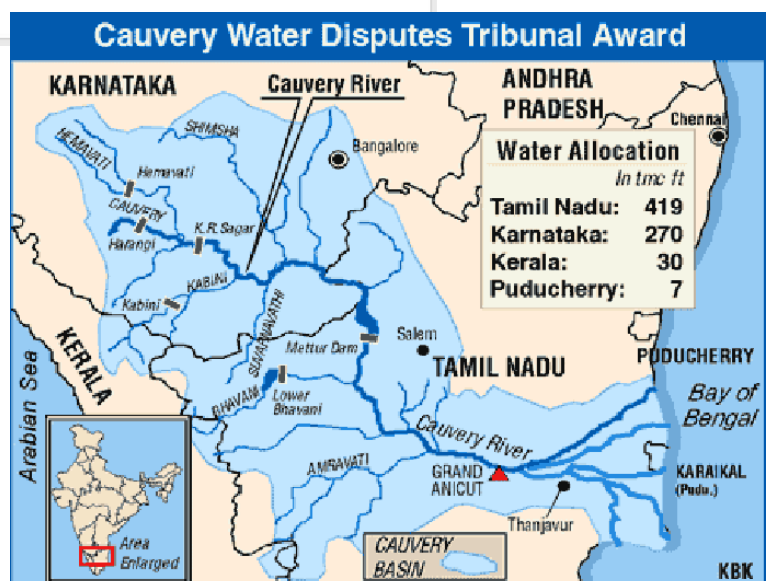
8. Cauvery River Water Dispute: Tamil Nadu Claims Shortfall, Karnataka Cites Drought

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Supreme Court Intervention:** The Supreme Court issued a notice to Karnataka following a petition by Tamil Nadu regarding a shortfall of 20,000 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft) in Cauvery water release.
- **Deficit Impact on Agriculture:** Tamil Nadu argued that the non-release of allocated water severely impacted its standing kharif crops in lower riparian agricultural belts.
- **Karnataka's Defense:** Karnataka submitted that it faced severe drought conditions across multiple districts, hindering full compliance despite best efforts as an upper riparian state.
- **CWRC Directives:** The Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC) recommended Karnataka maintain a flow of 4,000 cusecs of water to Tamil Nadu for 15 days.
- **State Appeal Plan:** Karnataka announced plans to appeal the CWRC recommendation, citing acute local water scarcity.
- **Regulatory Oversight Issues:** Tamil Nadu expressed concern over the failure of CWRC and the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) to resolve cumulative water deficits.

Essential Definitions

- **Riparian State:** A state situated along the banks of a natural watercourse, categorized as upper riparian (upstream) or lower riparian (downstream) based on river flow.
- **TMC FT (Thousand Million Cubic Feet):** A standard volumetric measurement unit used for large-scale water reservoir capacities and river allocations; 1 tmc ft equals roughly 28.31 billion liters.



- **Cusec:** A measure of water flow rate representing one cubic foot per second (equivalent to approximately 28.317 liters per second).

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 262:** Empowers Parliament to adjudicate disputes relating to the use, distribution, or control of waters in inter-state rivers or river valleys, excluding Supreme Court jurisdiction when specified by law.
- **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956:** Enacted under Article 262 to set up tribunals for resolving inter-state river disputes when bilateral negotiations fail.
- **Supreme Court Jurisdiction under Article 136:** Allows Special Leave Petitions against orders or implementation failures of statutory water management bodies.
- **Seventh Schedule (Entry 17 State List & Entry 56 Union List):** Grants States power over local water supplies, while Union holds jurisdiction over inter-state rivers and river valley development.
- **Statutory Regulatory Framework:** CWMA and CWRC were constituted following Supreme Court orders to monitor and implement the final award regarding Cauvery water sharing.

Conclusion

The dispute highlights the vulnerability of inter-state water-sharing agreements during distressed or deficit rainfall years. Strengthening distress-sharing formulas within CWMA and transitioning to scientific basin management remain essential to mitigate inter-state friction during droughts.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity and Governance):** Inter-State relations, federalism challenges, statutory bodies (CWMA/CWRC), Article 262, and judicial intervention in administrative disputes.
- **GS Paper III (Environment & Agriculture):** Water resource management, climate change impacts on rainfall patterns, drought mitigation, and crop security.

9. Red Sanders Smuggler Apprehended by Andhra Pradesh Police

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Major Enforcement Breakthrough:** Kadapa police arrested Simpathi Jakeer, a high-profile red sanders smuggler involved in 99 criminal cases, including 82 dedicated to illegal timber trade.
- **History of Violent Resistance:** The accused routinely targeted law enforcement teams in past escape attempts, attacking officers over 80 times using vehicular collisions and direct assaults.
- **Shift to Organised Crime Charges:** District police declared that red sanders smuggling will now be prosecuted as organized crime, bringing illegal financial trail investigations into focus.
- **Protection as National Treasure:** Police officials highlighted that red sanders trees are native to the Seshachalam forest biosphere and held as protected national treasures.

- **Strict Transport Ban:** Authorities emphasized that despite soaring overseas demand, illegal felling, timber extraction, and unauthorized transportation remain completely prohibited.
- **Tactical Interception:** The arrest followed targeted intelligence surveillance across smuggling corridors, during which police fired warning shots to immobilize the fleeing suspect.

Essential Definitions

- **Red Sanders (*Pterocarpus santalinus*):** An endemic tree species native exclusively to the southern Eastern Ghats mountain range of Andhra Pradesh, prized for its deep red heartwood.
- **Organized Crime Syndicate:** A structured network engaging in illegal activities for monetary gain through systematic violence, bribery, and illicit cross-border supply chains.
- **Seshachalam Biosphere Reserve:** A biodiversity-rich forest region in Andhra Pradesh providing the primary natural habitat for red sanders trees.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Categorizes protected flora and regulates timber trade restrictions to prevent overexploitation of endangered forest species.
- **CITES (Appendix II):** Regulates international trade of red sanders, requiring strict export permits to ensure timber harvesting does not threaten wild populations.
- **IUCN Conservation Status:** Listed as 'Endangered' on the IUCN Red List due to heavy illegal felling and population depletion.
- **Andhra Pradesh Forest Act, 1967:** Provides statutory provisions for seizing illicit forest produce, arresting offenders, and confiscating transport vehicles used in timber smuggling.
- **Article 48A (Directive Principles):** Enjoins the State to protect, preserve, and safeguard countrywide forest ecosystems and natural wildlife resources.

Conclusion

The arrest underscores the necessity of combining conservation laws with organized crime frameworks to dismantle timber syndicates. Protecting endemic species like red sanders requires inter-agency coordination, financial tracking, and rigorous enforcement across trade corridors.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Governance & Polity):** Law enforcement strategies, organized crime control, and statutory environmental compliance.
- **GS Paper III (Environment & Internal Security):** Conservation of endemic biodiversity, CITES compliance, illegal wildlife-timber trafficking networks, and forest governance.

10. The Murky World of Political Party Finance in India

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Surge in Unrecognized Party Funding:** Registered Unrecognized Political Parties (RUPPs) experienced a 223% income surge in FY2022-23, despite only 739 out of 2,764 filing financial records with the ECI.
- **Massive Campaign Capital:** Twenty-two political parties commanded ₹18,742.31 crore during the 2024 general elections, retaining ₹14,848.46 crore after spending just ₹3,861.57 crore on campaigns.
- **Exchequer Revenue Loss:** Tax exemptions on political contributions cost the public exchequer ₹11,813 crore over the past decade, with individual donors overtaking corporate contributions.
- **Deregistration Deficit:** The ECI can 'delist' non-compliant parties but lacks statutory powers to 'deregister' shell political parties, enabling them to collect tax-exempt donations perpetually.
- **Opaque Non-Exempt Funding:** Only 41.76% of ₹28,287 crore donated over nine years claimed tax relief, leaving the intent behind the remaining 58% of unexcused donations unscrutinized.
- **Calls for Structural Reforms:** Experts recommend court-monitored probes into electoral funding, CAG audits, spending ceilings on parties, and automated deregistration mechanisms.



Essential Definitions

- **Registered Unrecognized Political Parties (RUPPs):** Newly registered parties or those failing to secure the required vote percentage or seats in assembly or parliamentary elections to achieve recognized state/national status.
- **Delisting vs. Deregistration:** 'Delisting' removes an inactive party from official lists to deny privileges like common symbols, whereas 'deregistration' permanently strips its legal identity as a political party.
- **Shell Political Party:** An entity registered under electoral law primarily to operate as a financial conduit or tax-exempt receptacle without active participation in elections.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 19(1)(c):** Guarantees freedom to form associations or unions, forming the fundamental right under which political parties exist without explicit constitutional definition elsewhere.
- **Tenth Schedule:** The only portion of the Constitution that explicitly mentions political parties in the context of the anti-defection law.
- **Article 324:** Grants the Election Commission of India plenary powers for the superintendence, direction, and control of elections, serving as a "reservoir of authority".
- **Section 29A & 29B (RPA, 1951):** Section 29A governs party registration procedures, while Section 29B authorizes parties to accept voluntary contributions from individuals and non-government companies.

- **Section 13A (Income-tax Act, 1961):** Grants 100% tax exemption to political parties on voluntary contributions, property income, and capital gains, subject to filing compliance.

Conclusion

The lack of statutory powers for the ECI to deregister inactive parties and audit their finances fosters shell political entities and opaque political funding. Instituting mandatory CAG audits, capping party campaign expenditures, and standardizing digital financial disclosures are essential steps to ensure transparency and purify the electoral process.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity and Governance):** Structure, role, and functioning of the ECI; Representation of the People Act, 1951; electoral reforms; political funding transparency; and judicial activism.
- **GS Paper IV (Ethics and Governance):** Probity in governance, ethical issues in political funding, and institutional accountability.

11. Global Alternatives to the SWIFT Payment System

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Weaponization of Financial Infrastructure:** Sanctions and the exclusion of nations from SWIFT have accelerated Global South efforts to establish alternative cross-border payment platforms.
- **Emergence of Multilateral Models:** Alternative frameworks include China's CIPS, Russia's SPFS, Iran's SEPAMA, and the multi-CBDC cross-border settlement initiative Project mBridge.
- **De-Dollarization Trends:** The BRICS bloc continues pushing for local currency trade settlement mechanisms to reduce reliance on Western financial architecture and the U.S. dollar.
- **Evolution of Project mBridge:** Designed for peer-to-peer central bank digital currency (CBDC) transfers without correspondent banks, mBridge reached minimum viable product status despite the exit of the BIS.
- **Scaling National Systems:** China's CIPS and Russia's SPFS have expanded international participation significantly to insulate cross-border trade from geopolitical risks.
- **Robust Rupee-Rouble Mechanism:** India and Russia have successfully established a dedicated rupee-rouble payment infrastructure servicing 96% of their bilateral trade through special Vostro accounts.



Essential Definitions

- **SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication):** A Belgium-based secure messaging network used by financial institutions globally to send and receive cross-border transaction instructions.

- **Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC):** A sovereign digital form of fiat currency issued and regulated directly by a country's central bank.
- **CIPS (Cross-Border Interbank Payment System):** A Chinese onshore clearing and settlement services platform established to internationalize the use of the Renminbi (Yuan).
- **Special Rupee Vostro Account (SRVA):** An account held by a foreign bank in an Indian bank in Indian Rupees to facilitate local currency trade settlements.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA), 1999:** Provides the statutory authority for regulating cross-border trade transactions, foreign remittances, and currency conversions in India.
- **Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934:** Empowers the RBI to regulate monetary policy, administer foreign exchange reserves, and issue digital legal tender (e-Rupee).
- **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007:** Authorizes the RBI to designate, regulate, and supervise payment systems operational within India.
- **IMF Articles of Agreement (Article VIII):** Regulates obligations regarding international current account convertibility and exchange restrictions among member nations.

Conclusion

The diversification of financial messaging systems reflects a structural shift toward a multipolar global financial system. Establishing interoperable digital currency links and local currency mechanisms helps nations reduce reliance on single-system clearinghouses while ensuring economic resilience.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (International Relations):** Impact of global sanctions, BRICS initiatives, weaponization of global commons, and evolving global governance structures.
- **GS Paper III (Economy):** Bilateral trade mechanisms, central bank digital currencies (CBDC), cross-border payment integration, and financial architecture reforms.

12. Parliamentary Removal Process for the Chief Election Commissioner

Key Highlights & Summary

- **Opposition Motion for Removal:** Opposition parties initiated notices in Parliament to move a motion seeking the removal of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, following internal dissent within the Election Commission.
- **Reports of Internal Friction:** Reports revealed that Election Commissioners Sukhbir Singh Sandhu and Vivek Joshi formally recorded objections regarding unilateral decision-making in electoral roll revisions.
- **Constitutional Parity with SC Judges:** Article 324(5) shields the CEC from political pressures by requiring the exact same removal procedure and grounds applicable to a Judge of the Supreme Court.

- **High Removal Threshold:** Removal requires an absolute two-thirds majority of members present and voting in each House of Parliament, based strictly on "proved misbehaviour or incapacity".
- **Prerequisites for Admission:** Under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, a removal motion notice requires signatures from at least 100 Lok Sabha MPs or 50 Rajya Sabha MPs before admission.
- **Statutory Committee Investigation:** Upon admission of the motion, a three-member judicial committee investigates the specific charges of misbehaviour or incapacity before any parliamentary vote occurs.

Essential Definitions

- **Proved Misbehaviour:** Legal standard comprising corrupt practices, abuse of official position, willful violation of constitutional duty, or actions incompatible with constitutional office.
- **Incapacity:** Physical or mental inability of a constitutional authority to discharge statutory duties and functions effectively.
- **First Among Equals:** Administrative principle indicating the CEC chairs the multi-member Election Commission without possessing veto power over other Election Commissioners, with decisions made unanimously or by majority vote.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

- **Article 324(5):** Guarantees security of tenure to the CEC, mandating removal only in like manner and on like grounds as a Supreme Court Judge, while other ECs are removable only on CEC recommendation.
- **Article 124(4):** Outlines the constitutional impeachment procedure for Supreme Court Judges, requiring an address passed by both Houses of Parliament by a two-thirds majority in the same session.
- **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968:** Regulates the procedure for investigating and proving charges of misbehaviour or incapacity against judges and constitutional authorities like the CEC.
- **CEC and Other ECs (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023:** Governs terms of service, qualifications, search-cum-selection committee procedures, and reinforces constitutional removal safeguards under Section 11(2).



Conclusion

The elevated threshold for removing the CEC safeguards the Election Commission's institutional autonomy and shields it from arbitrary political interference. Adhering to structured inquiry mechanisms guarantees that allegations of administrative overreach or procedural irregularities undergo strict bipartisan judicial scrutiny.

UPSC Relevance

- **GS Paper II (Polity and Governance):** Structure, independence, and functioning of Constitutional Bodies (ECI), comparative safeguards under Article 324 vs Article 124,

parliamentary procedures for impeachment, judicial inquiry frameworks, and institutional integrity.

