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Friday, September 25, 2026



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IMPORTANT INSIGHTS

81st UN General Assembly Highlights India's Push for Reformed Multilateralism, Supply-Chain Resilience and Global South Representation

Recent Developments:

- The **81st United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)** opened on **8 September 2026** and is being held under the theme **"Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A United Nations That Delivers for All."** The General Debate during High-Level Week is scheduled from **22 to 28 September 2026**.
- External Affairs Minister **S. Jaishankar** co-chaired the inaugural **Partners for Multilateralism, International Law, Peace & Prosperity (P4M) Summit** in New York with European Council President **António Costa**.
- Jaishankar argued that intense strategic competition, geopolitical tensions and conflicts are placing the global order under stress and require stronger **multilateral cooperation**.
- He highlighted the interconnected **"4F crisis"** of **fuel, food, fertiliser and finance** and called for international frameworks, guardrails, diversification and de-risking of vulnerable supply chains.
- During the first **V4+India Foreign Ministers' Meeting**, the Visegrád Group countries — Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia — backed India's aspiration for **permanent membership of the UN Security Council (UNSC)**.

Global Order Under Stress:

Drivers of the Current Multilateral Crisis:

- The global system is undergoing **strategic rebalancing**, but intensified geopolitical competition has made cooperation more difficult.
- Ongoing conflicts, economic fragmentation, climate risks, technological disruption and supply-chain vulnerabilities increasingly have **cross-border consequences**.
- The UN system faces concerns regarding its **representativeness, effectiveness and decision-making capacity**, particularly when major conflicts expose limitations in collective security mechanisms.
- The UN itself has placed **renewed multilateralism, UN reform and inclusive global governance** among the six priorities of the 81st session.

Areas Requiring International Cooperation:

- Effective multilateral cooperation remains important for **peace and international security, climate action and climate justice, emerging technologies, development finance, counter-terrorism, resilient supply chains, disaster management and pandemic preparedness**.
- These challenges cannot be addressed effectively through isolated national responses because disruptions in one region can rapidly affect global markets, food systems, energy security and financial stability.

The 4F Crisis and Supply-Chain Resilience:

Fuel, Food, Fertiliser and Finance:

- The **4F crisis** refers to interconnected vulnerabilities involving **fuel, food, fertiliser and finance**.
- Energy disruptions can increase transportation and production costs, while fertiliser shortages can directly affect agricultural output and food prices.
- Financial stress can restrict the ability of developing economies to absorb external shocks and finance development.
- The crisis therefore demonstrates how **geopolitical disruptions can become economic and developmental crises**.

De-risking and Diversification:

- Jaishankar called for **frameworks and guardrails** for emerging technologies and new capabilities and advocated **de-risking and diversification** wherever chokepoint dominance threatens critical supplies.
- **De-risking** seeks to reduce excessive exposure to a particular supplier, market, technology or strategic route without necessarily abandoning economic interdependence.
- **Diversification** creates alternative sources and routes, thereby reducing vulnerability to geopolitical shocks, sanctions, conflicts and sudden supply disruptions.
- For India, this approach supports **strategic autonomy** and complements its efforts to develop resilient and geographically diversified supply chains.

Reformed Multilateralism:

India's Core Position:

- India advocates **reformed multilateralism** because many global institutions were designed according to the geopolitical realities of the post-Second World War period.
- India seeks institutions that provide **more participative deliberations, transparent decision-making and greater representation of contemporary global realities**.
- India also stresses that international institutions must uphold **international law, rules and norms** as the foundation of predictable global cooperation.
- The Permanent Mission of India has linked this approach with comprehensive **UN reform, revitalisation of the General Assembly and strengthening of ECOSOC**, alongside Security Council reform.

UN Security Council Reform:

- The UNSC has **15 members**, comprising **5 permanent members** — China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States — and **10 elected members**.
- India seeks **permanent membership in an expanded UNSC** and argues that the Council should better reflect contemporary geopolitical and economic realities.
- India's position forms part of its broader **Global South representation** agenda.
- The V4 countries' support for India's permanent membership during the first V4+India ministerial meeting adds another European voice to the broader debate on UNSC reform.

India–Visegrád Group Engagement:

V4+India Format:

- The **Visegrád Group (V4)** comprises **Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia**.
- The first **V4+India Foreign Ministers' Meeting** was held on the margins of the 81st UNGA in New York.
- Discussions covered **political and diplomatic cooperation, trade and economy, defence and security, technology, space, connectivity and people-to-people relations**.
- The format expands India's engagement with **Central Europe** and provides an additional plurilateral platform alongside bilateral relations and India-EU engagement.

India's Wider Diplomatic Engagement at UNGA:

Strategic and Regional Dialogues:

- Jaishankar's UNGA engagements included discussions with partners on **Ukraine, the Gulf, maritime security, strategic cooperation and UNSC reform**.
- India's diplomatic approach seeks to maintain dialogue with multiple stakeholders while protecting its **independent foreign-policy choices**.
- This approach is consistent with India's emphasis on **strategic autonomy, issue-based partnerships and multi-alignment**.

UNGA 81 and India's Global South Agenda:

Development and Representation:

- India continues to position itself as a prominent voice for the **Global South**, particularly on development finance, climate finance and institutional reform.
- India's official priorities for the 81st UNGA emphasise **South-South cooperation**, development concerns and stronger representation for developing countries.
- India has also highlighted its engagement with **LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS** through mechanisms such as the India-UN Development Partnership Fund and IBSA Fund.

Technology and Emerging Challenges:

- Global governance increasingly needs mechanisms for **Artificial Intelligence, digital technologies, cyber risks and other emerging capabilities**.
- The 81st UNGA itself identifies **digital governance, AI, science and technology** as a major priority under its "Innovation with Inclusion" pillar.
- India's approach combines technological cooperation with the need for **responsible governance, inclusion and strategic resilience**.

Significance for India:

Strategic and Economic Significance:

- **Strategic autonomy:** Diversified partnerships and supply chains reduce excessive dependence on individual geopolitical blocs or suppliers.
- **Global South leadership:** Institutional reform strengthens developing countries' participation in global decision-making.

- **Economic security:** Resilient supply chains reduce exposure to disruptions involving energy, food, fertilisers and critical inputs.
- **Rules-based order:** Respect for international law provides a framework for managing disputes and international cooperation.
- **Multilateral reform:** Greater representation and transparency can improve the legitimacy and effectiveness of global institutions.

Challenges and Way Forward:

Key Challenges:

- **Great-power rivalry** can obstruct consensus within multilateral institutions.
- **UNSC veto politics** can limit collective action on major conflicts.
- Institutional reform requires agreement among countries with different strategic interests.
- Developing countries continue to face constraints involving **development finance, climate finance, technology access and debt vulnerabilities**.
- Supply-chain diversification can increase short-term costs even while improving long-term resilience.

Way Forward:

- Multilateral institutions should become **more representative, transparent, accountable and responsive**.
- UNSC reform should remain focused on **credible representation and effective decision-making**.
- Global cooperation should combine **de-risking, diversification and resilient supply chains** with open and predictable trade.
- Emerging technologies require **internationally compatible governance frameworks and safeguards**.
- Global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, terrorism, food insecurity and technological disruption require **collective solutions rather than fragmented responses**.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Key Concepts:

- **Multilateralism:** Cooperation among multiple countries through common institutions, rules and decision-making mechanisms.
- **Reformed Multilateralism:** Updating global institutions so that their representation, procedures and decision-making reflect contemporary geopolitical realities.
- **Strategic Autonomy:** Maintaining independent foreign-policy choices while engaging simultaneously with multiple major powers and groupings.
- **De-risking:** Reducing excessive strategic dependence without necessarily ending economic interdependence.
- **Chokepoint:** A critical route, technology, resource or supply node whose disruption can significantly affect wider economic or strategic systems.
- **Multi-alignment:** Maintaining simultaneous relationships with different power centres based on issue-specific national interests.

UPSC Linkages:

- **GS-II:** International Relations, UN reforms, UNSC reform, Global South, multilateral institutions, India's foreign policy.
- **GS-III:** Energy security, food security, fertiliser security, supply-chain resilience, technology governance and economic security.

- **Essay:** Reforming global governance for a multipolar world; balancing national interest with collective action.
- **Prelims:** 81st UNGA theme, V4 composition, P4M, 4F crisis, UNSC structure and India's reform position.

Maharashtra's 2026 Women Farmers' Law Expands Formal Recognition, Entitlements and Institutional Support for Rural Women

Recent Developments:

- Maharashtra enacted the **Maharashtra Women Farmer Empowerment Act, 2026**, creating a formal framework to recognise women engaged in farming and allied agricultural activities as farmers irrespective of land ownership. The legislation provides for a **Woman Farmer Certificate** to facilitate access to government schemes, institutional credit, subsidies, insurance and agricultural services.
- The legislation was passed unanimously by the **Maharashtra Legislative Assembly on 2 July 2026** and subsequently by the **Maharashtra Legislative Council on 7 July 2026**.
- The framework recognises women involved in **crop cultivation, seed production, livestock rearing, fisheries, apiculture, dairy farming, horticulture, poultry, sericulture, vermiculture, forest-produce collection and value addition**, among other agricultural and allied activities.
- Maharashtra has subsequently operationalised a dedicated **Woman Farmer Certificate portal**, allowing eligible women to apply for recognition through an online process.
- The measure is significant because agricultural participation has historically been associated with **land ownership and formal land records**, although women frequently contribute to farming without holding legal title to agricultural land.

Women's Role in Indian Agriculture:

High Participation but Limited Formal Recognition:

- Women constitute a substantial part of India's agricultural workforce, particularly in rural areas, but their work is often classified as **family labour or agricultural labour** rather than independent farming activity.
- According to the **PLFS Quarterly Bulletin for April–June 2025**, agriculture accounted for **70.9% of rural female workers** aged 15 years and above under the Current Weekly Status, compared with **44.6% of rural male workers**.
- Women therefore have a major role in cultivation, livestock management, post-harvest activities, processing and other allied operations, while their contribution does not always translate into independent access to productive assets or institutional benefits.
- The **Agricultural Census 2015–16** recorded women as holders of only around **14% of operational agricultural holdings**, illustrating the gap between women's participation in agriculture and their formal control over agricultural assets.

Recognition Gap:

- The central issue is not only women's participation in agriculture but also their **institutional recognition as farmers**.
- When eligibility for agricultural schemes, credit, insurance or extension services depends primarily on land ownership, women cultivating family-owned, leased, shared or community land can remain outside formal farmer databases.

- The Maharashtra legislation directly addresses this gap by recognising **actual agricultural activity rather than land ownership alone** as a basis for identifying women farmers.

Major Issues Faced by Women Farmers:

Institutional and Database Gaps:

- **Fragmented databases:** Land records, agricultural databases, credit records and welfare databases do not always capture the complete extent of women's participation in agriculture.
- **Land-record dependence:** Linking farmer identification primarily with ownership records disadvantages women who cultivate land owned by their husbands, families or other persons.
- **Absence of a unified definition:** Different agricultural schemes may apply different eligibility criteria, creating gaps between recognition as an agricultural worker and recognition as a farmer.

Socio-Economic Barriers:

- **Patriarchal norms:** Social structures can restrict women's control over land, income, machinery, technology and agricultural decision-making.
- **Limited access to productive assets:** Women often face barriers in accessing institutional credit, irrigation, farm machinery, quality inputs, extension services and organised markets.
- **Unpaid family labour:** A significant portion of women's agricultural work occurs within family farming systems without direct wages or independent control over income.
- **Technology and extension gaps:** Limited access to mechanisation, training and agricultural advisory services can reduce productivity and increase the physical burden of farm work.

Government Initiatives for Women Farmers:

National Policy for Farmers, 2007:

- The **National Policy for Farmers, 2007** adopted a broader farmer-oriented policy framework aimed at improving the economic condition, productivity and sustainability of farming, moving beyond a narrow focus on agricultural land ownership.

DAY-NRLM and Self-Help Groups:

- The **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihoods Mission** organises rural women into **Self-Help Groups**, creating institutional platforms for savings, credit, livelihoods, training and collective economic activity.
- SHGs can strengthen women's bargaining power and facilitate access to **formal credit, livelihood opportunities, skill development and collective agricultural enterprises**.

Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana:

- **Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana (MKSP)** is a sub-component of **DAY-NRLM** launched to enhance women's participation and productivity in agriculture and create sustainable rural livelihoods.
- MKSP focuses on systematic investment in women's agricultural capabilities, sustainable agriculture practices, livelihood opportunities and access to agricultural resources.
- Government agricultural schemes have also provided for states and implementing agencies to incur **at least 30% of expenditure on women farmers** under specified beneficiary-oriented programmes.

Kudumbashree and Collective Farming:

- **Kudumbashree in Kerala** provides an institutional model in which women are organised into collective farming groups and Joint Liability Groups, enabling access to land, credit, training and agricultural support.
- Kudumbashree's collective farming model helps women participate as **cultivators rather than merely agricultural labourers** and links collective production with financial and institutional support.
- Kerala's experience demonstrates how women's collectives can combine **land access, institutional credit, capacity building and market participation**.

Maharashtra Women Farmer Empowerment Act, 2026:

Key Features:

- The Act provides women engaged in farming or allied activities with an official **Woman Farmer Certificate** without requiring ownership of agricultural land.
- Eligible women can include **landowners, tenants, sharecroppers, tenant farmers and agricultural labourers** who are actively engaged in covered agricultural activities.
- The framework provides for institutional mechanisms including a **Women Farmer Empowerment Council, Women Farmer Empowerment Cell, State Monitoring Committee, women farmer database and Maharashtra State Fund for Women Farmers**.
- The certification framework can facilitate access to **institutional credit, crop insurance, subsidies, agricultural inputs, skill training, agricultural technology, market linkages, storage and transport support**, subject to the eligibility conditions of individual schemes.
- The legislation therefore attempts to shift farmer identification from a predominantly **land-title-based approach towards an activity-based recognition framework**.

Implementation Framework:

- The dedicated Maharashtra portal enables women to submit applications using **Aadhaar-based verification and agricultural information linked with AgriStack**, with administrative support available at the taluka and district levels.
- The framework provides for local-level verification through the **Gram Sabha or Nagar Panchayat**, followed by issuance of the certificate where the application is approved.
- The certificate itself does not automatically confer every agricultural scheme benefit because **individual schemes retain their own eligibility conditions**.

Why Women Farmer Recognition Matters:

Economic Empowerment:

- Formal recognition can improve women's access to **institutional credit, crop insurance, subsidies, agricultural extension and markets**, thereby strengthening their economic agency.
- Recognition can also improve the visibility of women's contribution in official agricultural statistics and policy planning.

Gender-Responsive Agricultural Governance:

- A gender-disaggregated farmer database can enable governments to design policies according to the actual participation of women in **cultivation, livestock, fisheries, horticulture, processing and other allied activities**.

- Formal recognition can help convert women from largely invisible contributors within household agriculture into **identifiable economic actors within the agricultural value chain**.

Challenges in Scaling the Model Nationally:

Identification and Data Quality:

- A national farmer registry must distinguish between **land ownership, cultivation rights, agricultural labour and allied activities** without creating duplication or exclusion.
- Linking multiple databases requires reliable interoperability among land records, farmer registries, credit systems, insurance databases and welfare platforms.

Access Beyond Certification:

- Recognition alone cannot ensure empowerment unless women also obtain **land rights, credit, technology, machinery, irrigation, extension services and market access**.
- Administrative barriers, low digital literacy and inadequate awareness can limit the practical value of online certification systems.

Institutional Coordination:

- Effective implementation requires coordination among **agriculture departments, revenue authorities, rural development institutions, Panchayati Raj bodies, banks, insurance providers and farmer organisations**.
- States need mechanisms for grievance redressal and periodic verification without imposing excessive documentation requirements on women farmers.

Way Forward:

National Women Farmer Registry:

- India can develop a **gender-disaggregated farmer database** that recognises agricultural activity alongside ownership and tenancy status.
- Farmer identification should capture women involved in **cultivation and allied activities**, including livestock, fisheries, horticulture, seed production and post-harvest value addition.

Integrated Farmer Identification:

- Women recognised as farmers should receive a **Farmer ID** that can be interoperable with agricultural schemes, institutional credit, crop insurance, extension services, input subsidies and agricultural market platforms.
- Data integration should follow principles of **accuracy, consent, privacy, accountability and grievance redressal**.

Access to Productive Assets:

- Recognition should be accompanied by greater access to **institutional credit, agricultural machinery, quality inputs, irrigation, extension services, digital technologies, storage and markets**.
- Women's collectives, SHGs, Farmer Producer Organisations and Joint Liability Groups can provide institutional platforms for aggregation and bargaining power.

Value Addition for UPSC:

Key Concepts:

- **Women Farmers:** Women directly engaged in agricultural and allied activities, whose formal recognition may depend on the applicable legal and scheme framework.
- **Gender-Responsive Agriculture:** Agricultural policymaking that considers gender-specific differences in access to land, credit, technology, inputs, markets and decision-making.
- **Asset Ownership Gap:** The disparity between women's participation in agricultural production and their ownership or control over agricultural land and productive assets.
- **Activity-Based Farmer Recognition:** Identification of farmers on the basis of actual agricultural activity rather than land ownership alone.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Enabling women farmers to access formal banking, institutional credit, insurance, savings and other financial services.

UPSC Linkages:

- **GS-I:** Women's role in agriculture, rural social structure, gender relations and demographic dimensions of rural employment.
- **GS-II:** Government policies, women's empowerment, decentralisation, welfare delivery, institutional mechanisms and gender-responsive governance.
- **GS-III:** Indian agriculture, agricultural credit, land reforms, farm mechanisation, agricultural markets, digital agriculture and rural livelihoods.
- **Essay:** Recognition of women's unpaid and invisible economic contribution; inclusive agricultural development.
- **Prelims:** Maharashtra Women Farmer Empowerment Act, 2026, Woman Farmer Certificate, MKSP, DAY-NRLM, Kudumbashree and PLFS agricultural-employment data.

11th Ayurveda Day 2026 Highlights India's Push for Evidence-Based Ayurveda, Integrated Healthcare and Global Traditional Medicine Leadership

Recent Developments:

- The **11th Ayurveda Day** was celebrated on **23 September 2026** in **Nagpur, Maharashtra**, under the theme "**Ayurveda for a Healthier Tomorrow**". The national programme emphasised evidence, research, innovation, preventive healthcare and community well-being.
- The celebrations witnessed the release of **Safety Dossiers on Gokshura and Chandrashura**, **Standard Treatment Guidelines on Skin Disorders**, the first **Ayush Services Sector Report**, and the "**From Traditional Wisdom to Global Leadership: Ayush Vision 2030**" report.
- The **CCRAS-AGNI Assessment Scale Web Portal** was also launched to support systematic assessment and translation of Ayurveda knowledge into clinical practice.
- The 2026 observance reflects the government's shift towards strengthening Ayurveda through **scientific validation, quality standards, clinical guidance, research and global standardisation**, rather than relying only on traditional textual knowledge.

Ayurveda: Foundations and Contemporary Relevance:

Core Features:

- **Ayurveda** is an ancient Indian system of medicine whose classical knowledge is associated with texts such as the **Charaka Samhita** and **Sushruta Samhita**.
- The term Ayurveda combines **Ayu**, meaning life, and **Veda**, meaning knowledge, and its broad objective is traditionally understood as maintaining the health of healthy individuals and managing disease in the diseased.
- Ayurveda conceptualises health through the balance of **doshas, agni, dhatus and malas**, along with harmony between the body, mind and wider dimensions of well-being.
- Its therapeutic knowledge includes the use of **medicinal plants, animal-derived substances and minerals**, requiring modern systems of safety assessment, quality control and standardisation for wider healthcare integration.

Ayurveda Day:

- **Ayurveda Day is observed annually on 23 September**, following the Ministry of Ayush's decision in 2025 to establish a fixed annual date instead of linking the observance to Dhanteras.
- The fixed date provides a **uniform global calendar identity** and facilitates wider participation in Ayurveda-related awareness, research and public-health activities.
- The 2026 theme, "**Ayurveda for a Healthier Tomorrow**," connects India's traditional medical knowledge with future-oriented healthcare, preventive health and scientific innovation.

Building Healthcare Infrastructure for Ayurveda Integration:

Budgetary and Institutional Support:

- The **Union Budget 2026–27** allocated **₹4,408.93 crore** to the **Ministry of Ayush**, with major allocations for autonomous bodies, central-sector schemes and the **National Ayush Mission**.
- The Budget proposed **three new All India Institutes of Ayurveda**, upgradation of Ayush pharmacies and Drug Testing Laboratories, and strengthening of the **WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre at Jamnagar**.
- These measures seek to expand **higher education, clinical services, research capacity, quality assurance and international cooperation** in traditional medicine.

National Ayush Mission and Ayushman Arogya Mandirs:

- The **National Ayush Mission** supports States and Union Territories in strengthening Ayush infrastructure, establishing and upgrading institutions, developing integrated hospitals and operationalising **Ayushman Arogya Mandirs**.
- As reported by States and Union Territories in July 2026, **12,500 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs** had been approved for operationalisation by upgrading **10,941 Ayush dispensaries** and **1,559 sub-health centres**, with all reported as functional.
- Ayush facilities are also being **co-located with Primary Health Centres, Community Health Centres and District Hospitals**, allowing patients access to different systems of medicine within public healthcare facilities.

Integration with Modern Healthcare:

- An **Ayush Vertical under the Directorate General of Health Services** has been established through cooperation between the Ministry of Ayush and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to support planning, monitoring and integration of Ayush into public health programmes and healthcare services.
- The Ayush Vertical is also developing **evidence-informed Standard Treatment Guidelines** to facilitate clinical integration.
- Such integration requires clear clinical protocols, qualified practitioners, pharmacovigilance, referral mechanisms and evidence-based assessment of interventions.

Development of Ayurveda Education and Research Infrastructure:

Expansion of Educational Capacity:

- The **National Ayush Mission** supports the establishment and upgradation of undergraduate and postgraduate Ayush institutions, including pharmacy and paramedical programmes.
- The Union Budget 2026–27 proposed **three new All India Institutes of Ayurveda** to strengthen **education, clinical services and research**.
- Expansion of institutions is intended to address the demand for trained professionals while strengthening the connection between **education, clinical practice and research**.

Research and Evidence Generation:

- The **AYURGYAN Scheme**, launched by the Ministry of Ayush in **2021–22**, provides financial assistance for research and development in Ayurveda and other Ayush systems.
- Of **₹17.79 crore** allocated across 34 research projects, **₹9.38 crore was allocated to 17 Ayurveda projects** focusing on areas including safety, efficacy and validation.
- The **Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences** serves as an autonomous research body under the Ministry of Ayush and supports clinical, pharmacological, literary and other research activities in Ayurveda.
- The **Studentship Programme for Ayurveda Research Ken** encourages undergraduate Ayurveda students to undertake short-term research projects, thereby developing an early research culture within Ayurveda education.
- Safety dossiers for medicinal plants are being developed through systematic assessment of **traditional references, pharmacological evidence, toxicological data and available clinical literature**, strengthening the evidence base for Ayurvedic interventions.

Regulation, Quality Control and Standardisation:

Regulatory Framework for Ayurvedic Medicines:

- Ayurvedic medicines are regulated under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** and **Drugs Rules, 1945**, which contain specific regulatory provisions for Ayush drugs.
- Manufacturers must comply with prescribed licensing requirements, provide evidence relating to safety and effectiveness, follow **Good Manufacturing Practices** and meet applicable pharmacopoeial quality standards.
- Drug inspectors collect samples from manufacturing units and retail outlets for testing, and action can be taken against products that fail prescribed quality standards.
- The **Pharmacopoeia Commission for Indian Medicine and Homoeopathy** establishes formulary and pharmacopoeial standards for Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy medicines and functions as the Central Drugs Laboratory for Indian Medicine and Homoeopathy.

Digital and Food-Product Regulation:

- The **e-Aushadhi portal** supports paperless processing and tracking of licensing applications for Ayush drug manufacturing, improving regulatory efficiency.
- **Ayurveda Aahara** standards developed by the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India in collaboration with the Ministry of Ayush provide a regulatory framework for specified traditional Ayurvedic food products.
- The 2026 Budget's proposal to upgrade **Ayush pharmacies and Drug Testing Laboratories** seeks to improve quality control, standardisation and availability of skilled manpower.

Internationalisation of Ayurveda and Traditional Medicine:

WHO and Global Standardisation:

- The **WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre** is located in **Jamnagar, Gujarat**, and functions as a global knowledge hub focused on evidence, research, innovation, sustainability and equitable integration of traditional medicine.
- WHO adopted the **Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034** in 2025, emphasising evidence generation, safety and quality regulation, appropriate integration into health systems and qualified practitioners.
- The traditional medicine component of **ICD-11** provides a framework for standardised recording and reporting of traditional medicine conditions. WHO states that an additional module covering diagnostic systems related to **Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani** is under development.
- India is also working with WHO on the **International Classification of Health Interventions** and national intervention codes for Ayurveda, Siddha and Unani, which can improve standardised documentation and international comparability.

International Cooperation:

- India has developed bilateral and institutional partnerships to promote **Ayush education, research, academic exchanges, regulatory cooperation and traditional medicine diplomacy**.
- The expansion of international cooperation supports the global visibility of Ayurveda while creating a need for internationally comparable evidence, safety standards and practitioner qualifications.
- Ayurveda can also contribute to **medical value travel** through specialised Ayush healthcare and wellness services, supported by dedicated Ayush visa categories.

Digital Health, Innovation and Knowledge Dissemination:

Technology Integration:

- Digital platforms can improve access to Ayurveda through **telemedicine, electronic health records, research databases and standardised clinical documentation**.
- Integration of Ayurveda-related diagnostic and intervention data into international health classifications can facilitate research, health-system monitoring and potentially insurance and reimbursement processes.
- Artificial intelligence-based translation tools can improve access to Ayurveda research and educational material across Indian languages, supporting wider dissemination of technical knowledge.

Medicinal Plants and Sustainability:

- Ayurveda's dependence on medicinal plants creates a direct link between healthcare policy and **biodiversity conservation, sustainable harvesting, cultivation and value-chain development**.
- Strengthening medicinal-plant supply chains can provide farmers with livelihood opportunities while improving the availability of standardised raw materials for Ayurvedic medicines.
- Sustainable sourcing is essential because growing commercial demand can create pressure on medicinal-plant biodiversity and traditional knowledge resources.

Key Challenges in Ayurveda Integration:

Evidence and Clinical Validation:

- A major challenge is generating **high-quality clinical evidence** through appropriate study designs, reproducible methodologies and transparent reporting.
- Traditional textual evidence and contemporary scientific evidence serve different purposes; responsible integration therefore requires systematic validation rather than assuming efficacy solely from historical use.
- Research should cover **safety, efficacy, dosage, interactions, contraindications and long-term outcomes**.

Quality and Regulatory Challenges:

- Variations in raw materials, manufacturing practices, formulation quality and clinical practice can affect the consistency of Ayurvedic products and services.
- Effective regulation requires stronger **quality testing, pharmacovigilance, standardisation, traceability and enforcement** across the supply chain.

Healthcare-System Integration:

- Ayurveda's integration with modern medicine requires clearly defined **clinical roles, referral systems, practitioner competencies, treatment protocols and patient-safety mechanisms**.
- Evidence-based integration should complement, rather than blur, the distinct diagnostic and therapeutic frameworks of different medical systems.

Way Forward:

Evidence-Based Ayurveda:

- India should strengthen **multidisciplinary clinical research, pharmacological studies, safety assessment, standardisation and real-world evidence generation**.
- Research institutions should prioritise conditions with significant public-health burdens, particularly **non-communicable diseases, ageing-related conditions and preventive healthcare**.

Global Leadership:

- India can use the **WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre**, international classifications and bilateral partnerships to promote globally comparable standards for Ayurveda.
- Globalisation of Ayurveda should combine **civilisational knowledge with scientific validation, regulatory credibility, intellectual-property protection and biodiversity conservation**.

Public Health Integration:

- Ayush services can strengthen preventive and promotive healthcare when integrated through appropriate protocols, trained personnel and robust referral mechanisms.
- The long-term objective should be a **people-centred, evidence-informed and safe healthcare ecosystem** in which Ayurveda's validated contributions can be assessed objectively.

Value Addition for UPSC:***Key Concepts:***

- **Ayurveda:** Traditional Indian system of medicine based on classical knowledge concerning health, disease prevention and therapeutic management.
- **Evidence-Based Healthcare:** Healthcare decision-making based on the best available scientific evidence, clinical expertise and patient-related considerations.
- **Pharmacopoeia:** An official collection specifying standards relating to the identity, purity, strength and quality of medicines.
- **Pharmacovigilance:** Detection, assessment, understanding and prevention of adverse effects or other medicine-related problems.
- **Medical Value Travel:** International movement of patients to another country to obtain healthcare or wellness-related services.
- **Traditional Medicine Diplomacy:** Use of traditional medical knowledge, institutions and cooperation mechanisms as instruments of international engagement.

UPSC Linkages:

- **GS-II:** Government policies, public health, healthcare delivery, international organisations, India's soft power and international cooperation.
- **GS-III:** Biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, biodiversity conservation, medicinal plants, intellectual property, digital health and research and development.
- **GS-IV:** Ethical issues in evidence-based healthcare, informed consent, patient safety, scientific temper and responsible use of traditional knowledge.
- **Essay:** Balancing traditional knowledge with modern scientific validation; preventive healthcare and holistic well-being.
- **Prelims:** 11th Ayurveda Day 2026, theme, Ministry of Ayush, National Ayush Mission, Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, CCRAS, Pharmacopoeia Commission, WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre, ICD-11 and Global Traditional Medicine Strategy 2025–2034.

SSA 5000 Strengthens India's Sustainability Assurance Framework to Improve ESG Disclosure Credibility and Reduce Greenwashing

Recent Developments:

- The **Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI)** has issued the **Standard on Sustainability Assurance (SSA) 5000**, aligned with the International Standard on Sustainability Assurance (ISSA) 5000 developed by the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board (IAASB).

- SSA 5000 will become applicable from **1 April 2027** and establishes a principles-based framework for assurance engagements covering sustainability information across areas such as climate, labour practices and biodiversity.
- ICAI has incorporated certain **India-specific carve-outs** in comparison with ISSA 5000, particularly concerning **joint audits and forward-looking statements**.
- The standard is intended to improve the **credibility, consistency, comparability and reliability** of sustainability disclosures and strengthen confidence among investors and other stakeholders.
- The new framework follows ICAI's earlier sustainability assurance standards, including **SSAE 3000** for sustainability information and **SAE 3410** for greenhouse-gas statements. These earlier frameworks are to be withdrawn from April 2027 as SSA 5000 becomes applicable.

What is Sustainability Assurance?:

Meaning and Purpose:

- **Sustainability assurance** is the independent examination of sustainability information reported by an entity to determine whether the disclosed information is supported by appropriate evidence and is free from material misstatement.
- Sustainability information differs from conventional financial information because it may involve **estimates, technical measurements, assumptions and diverse data-collection methodologies**, creating challenges for consistency and verification.
- Assurance therefore introduces an independent layer of scrutiny between **management-generated sustainability claims and stakeholders relying on those claims**.

Key Functions of an Assurance Engagement:

- An assurance practitioner may assess the **reporting criteria, materiality, risks, internal controls, data quality and supporting evidence** underlying sustainability disclosures.
- The practitioner evaluates whether identified information contains **material misstatements** and subsequently forms an assurance conclusion.
- The framework can operate across different sustainability reporting frameworks, allowing assurance to remain distinct from the particular format used to prepare the underlying disclosure.

Scope of SSA 5000:

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Environmental, Social and Governance Dimensions:

- SSA 5000 covers sustainability information across diverse **Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)** topics, including greenhouse-gas emissions, energy use, water consumption, waste management, biodiversity, labour practices, diversity and governance indicators.
- The broad scope reflects the expansion of sustainability reporting from primarily environmental indicators towards a wider assessment of an entity's **social and governance impacts and risks**.

From Fragmented Assurance to a Common Framework:

- Before SSA 5000, sustainability assurance in India involved standards such as **SSAE 3000** and **SAE 3410**, with the latter specifically addressing greenhouse-gas statements.
- Internationally, **ISSA 5000** provides a global baseline for sustainability assurance and is effective for relevant engagements from **15 December 2026**. It is designed to apply to both mandatory and voluntary sustainability assurance engagements.

- SSA 5000 therefore represents India's move towards a **globally aligned but domestically adapted assurance architecture**.

SSA 5000 and Greenwashing:

Strengthening Evidence-Based Disclosure:

- **Greenwashing** refers to misleading or exaggerated claims that create an impression of stronger environmental or sustainability performance than is supported by evidence.
- For example, a company claiming substantial reductions in carbon emissions may need to substantiate the claim through **emission calculations, energy records, measurement methodologies and relevant internal controls**.
- Independent assurance can reduce reliance on unverified management assertions by requiring sustainability claims to be evaluated against **documented evidence and appropriate reporting criteria**.

Addressing Selective Disclosure:

- Greenwashing can also arise through **selective disclosure or cherry-picking**, where favourable sustainability outcomes are highlighted while significant adverse impacts are omitted.
- Assurance procedures can require practitioners to examine whether the **reporting boundary and scope** appropriately capture material information relevant to stakeholders.
- This becomes particularly important for companies whose environmental and social impacts extend beyond their direct operations into **suppliers, contractors and other parts of the value chain**.

Materiality and Sustainability Assurance:

Importance of Materiality:

- **Materiality** determines whether an omission, misstatement or distortion could influence the decisions of users of sustainability information.
- Sustainability assurance can involve both **quantitative and qualitative information**, requiring practitioners to consider not only numerical magnitude but also the nature and significance of particular disclosures.
- The IAASB has specifically issued implementation guidance on materiality under ISSA 5000, including considerations relating to **double materiality** where applicable.

Limited and Reasonable Assurance:

- Sustainability assurance may involve different levels of assurance, with **reasonable assurance** providing a higher level of confidence than limited assurance but generally requiring more extensive procedures.
- SEBI's BRSR framework has progressively introduced assurance or assessment requirements for specified sustainability indicators, while requiring providers to possess relevant sustainability expertise and avoid conflicts of interest.

Link with SEBI's BRSR Framework:

Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting:

- **Business Responsibility and Sustainability Report (BRSR)** provides a structured framework for listed entities to disclose information relating to business responsibility and sustainability.

- SEBI introduced **BRSR Core** with a focused set of key performance indicators to strengthen the reliability of ESG disclosures and progressively expand their coverage.
- SEBI has also addressed sustainability information relating to the **value chain**, recognising that significant ESG impacts can arise outside a company's direct operations.
- SSA 5000 complements this regulatory ecosystem by providing a professional assurance framework for examining sustainability information.

India-Specific Features and Significance:

Domestic Adaptation of a Global Standard:

- SSA 5000 is broadly aligned with **ISSA 5000**, but ICAI has introduced India-specific modifications to account for domestic assurance practices and regulatory requirements.
- The reported carve-outs relating to **joint audits and forward-looking statements** illustrate that global standards may require jurisdiction-specific adaptation before implementation in domestic regulatory and professional systems.

Transition from Existing Standards:

- ICAI had already developed **SSAE 3000** for sustainability information and **SAE 3410** for greenhouse-gas statements. SAE 3410 became mandatory for applicable assurance reports covering periods ending on or after **31 March 2024**.
- SSA 5000 consolidates the sustainability assurance approach into a broader framework covering different categories of sustainability information rather than treating greenhouse-gas information as a separate assurance domain.

Implementation Challenges:

Complex Value Chains:

- Companies may struggle to obtain reliable sustainability data from **suppliers, contractors and other business partners**, particularly where value chains span multiple jurisdictions.

Data Quality and Comparability:

- Differences in **measurement methodologies, reporting boundaries and data systems** can reduce comparability between companies and increase the workload for assurance practitioners.

Forward-Looking Sustainability Claims:

- **Net-zero targets, transition plans and future climate commitments** depend on assumptions about technology, investment, regulation and future business decisions, making their verification more complex.

Multidisciplinary Skill Requirements:

- Sustainability assurance requires knowledge spanning **accounting, auditing, environmental science, climate-related measurement, data systems and regulatory compliance**.
- The availability of professionals with this combination of expertise will influence the quality and scalability of implementation.

Compliance Costs:

- Companies may need to strengthen **data-management systems, internal controls, documentation and specialised human resources** to make sustainability information assurance-ready.
- Smaller enterprises may face relatively greater capacity and cost constraints.

Broader Significance for India:

Corporate Governance and Investor Confidence:

- Independent assurance can strengthen the reliability of non-financial disclosures and help investors distinguish between **substantiated sustainability performance and unsupported claims**.
- Greater disclosure reliability can also improve the quality of ESG-related decision-making and corporate accountability.

Green Finance and Sustainable Investment:

- Reliable sustainability information is increasingly relevant to **ESG investing, sustainable finance, climate-risk assessment and responsible capital allocation**.
- Stronger assurance mechanisms can therefore contribute to the information infrastructure required for sustainable finance.

Professional Services and Employment:

- The expansion of sustainability assurance can increase demand for professionals combining **accounting, assurance, environmental expertise, technology and regulatory knowledge**.
- It can also encourage the development of specialised sustainability-management and assurance services.

Way Forward:

Build Assurance-Ready Data Systems:

- Companies should develop integrated systems for **data collection, measurement, documentation, internal controls and audit trails** before sustainability information reaches the assurance stage.

Strengthen Value-Chain Transparency:

- Sustainability reporting should increasingly capture material impacts arising across the **entire value chain**, subject to applicable reporting requirements and clearly defined boundaries.

Develop Multidisciplinary Capacity:

- Professional education should integrate **accounting, ESG standards, climate science, environmental measurement, digital technologies and regulatory compliance**.

Maintain Global Alignment with Indian Relevance:

- India can use SSA 5000 to remain aligned with international sustainability-assurance developments while adapting implementation to its **domestic regulatory structure, reporting ecosystem and professional practices.**

Value Addition for UPSC:

Key Concepts:

- **ESG:** Environmental, Social and Governance factors used to assess an entity's broader sustainability performance and risks.
- **Sustainability Assurance:** Independent examination of sustainability information and related evidence.
- **Greenwashing:** Misleading or exaggerated sustainability claims.
- **BRSR:** SEBI's sustainability-reporting framework for listed entities.
- **BRSR Core:** A focused set of sustainability indicators subject to specified assurance or assessment requirements.
- **Materiality:** Significance of information or misstatement in influencing the decisions of intended users.
- **Value-Chain Disclosure:** Reporting of relevant sustainability impacts beyond an entity's direct operations.

UPSC Linkages:

- **GS-II:** SEBI, corporate regulation, corporate governance and accountability.
- **GS-III:** Sustainable development, climate governance, green finance, ESG reporting and environmental regulation.
- **GS-IV:** Corporate ethics, transparency, accountability and prevention of misleading disclosures.
- **Essay:** Role of credible non-financial information in sustainable and responsible capitalism.

Prelims Facts:

- **SSA 5000:** Standard on Sustainability Assurance issued by ICAI.
- **Effective in India:** 1 April 2027.
- **International counterpart:** ISSA 5000 issued by IAASB.
- **Earlier ICAI standards:** SSAE 3000 and SAE 3410.
- **Regulatory ecosystem:** SSA 5000 operates alongside India's sustainability-reporting architecture, including SEBI's BRSR framework.

3rd National Conference of ANTF Heads Strengthens India's Network-Centric Strategy to Dismantle Drug Trafficking by 2029

Recent Developments:

- The **3rd National Conference of Anti-Narcotics Task Force Heads** was inaugurated in **New Delhi on 22 September 2026** by the Union Home Minister, with heads of ANTFs from **36 States and Union Territories** and representatives of concerned government departments and other stakeholders participating.

- The conference reinforced the national objective of achieving a **Drug-Free India by 2029**, with emphasis on dismantling entire narcotics networks rather than focusing only on seizures and arrests of street-level couriers.
- The conference operationalised the **Vision Document on Narcotics Control (2026–2029)**, which was released on 26 June 2026 and provides a time-bound national roadmap for enforcement, precursor and synthetic-drug control, demand reduction and harm reduction, and capacity building and coordination.
- The conference focused on **cartel dismantling, synthetic drugs and clandestine laboratories, darknet and cryptocurrency investigations, precursor control, illicit cultivation, enforcement effectiveness and demand reduction**.
- New **Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) zonal complexes** were also taken up at Lucknow and Dehradun, while the NCB launched a redesigned website and awareness initiatives against narcotic substances.

Anti-Narcotics Task Force Framework:

Institutional Role:

- **Anti-Narcotics Task Forces (ANTFs)** are specialised enforcement units established at the State and Union Territory levels to strengthen action against narcotic drugs and coordinate with the NCB and other drug-law enforcement agencies.
- The ANTF framework operates within the broader **Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD)** mechanism, which facilitates coordination among Central and State agencies involved in combating drug trafficking and abuse.
- NCORD follows a **multi-level coordination structure**, with Apex and Executive Committees at the Central level, State-level NCORD meetings chaired by Chief Secretaries, and District-level meetings chaired by District Magistrates.

Evolution of the National Conference:

- The first conference focused on establishing and institutionalising specialised State-level ANTFs and strengthening the institutional framework.
- The second conference emphasised **operational capability, inter-agency coordination and execution**.
- The third conference represents a shift towards **measurable targets, defined timelines, network dismantling and accountability**, linking enforcement outcomes with the broader 2026–2029 national roadmap.

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Core Strategic Shift: From Seizures to Network Dismantling:

Network-Centric Enforcement:

- Traditional narcotics enforcement often measures performance through **seizures, arrests and registered cases**, but dismantling organised trafficking requires investigation of the entire chain from production and financing to transportation, distribution and leadership.
- The new approach emphasises **intelligence-led investigations, backward and forward linkages, financial investigation and coordinated action** against the complete trafficking ecosystem.
- The objective is to identify and disrupt **kingpins, financiers, suppliers, transporters, distributors and facilitators**, rather than treating individual couriers as isolated offenders.

Three-Tier Operational Approach:

- **Entry points:** Coastal routes, international borders, airports and ports require enhanced surveillance because they provide channels for cross-border movement of narcotics.

- **Inter-State distribution:** Highways, railway networks and postal or courier systems can facilitate movement between production, transit and consumption areas.
- **Local distribution:** District-level enforcement must target retail networks, local distributors and other actors involved in supplying drugs to end users.

Financial Intelligence and Digital Investigations:

Following the Money:

- Drug trafficking generates substantial illicit profits, making **financial investigation and asset tracing** essential components of network dismantling.
- Enforcement agencies need to investigate **money laundering channels, illicit financial flows and digital transactions** associated with narcotics networks and use applicable legal mechanisms for attachment and confiscation of proceeds of crime.
- Financial investigation can help identify the economic architecture supporting trafficking networks even when physical consignments are intercepted before reaching their destination.

Darknet and Cryptocurrency:

- The growing use of **darknet marketplaces, encrypted communication, cryptocurrency and digital payment systems** allows traffickers to reduce direct physical exposure and complicate conventional investigation.
- The 2026–2029 roadmap therefore emphasises dedicated capabilities for **darknet and cryptocurrency investigations**, advanced technology and AI-enabled analytics to identify organised cyber-enabled trafficking networks.

District-Level Classification and Targeted Enforcement:

Manufacturing and Origin Areas:

- Areas containing **clandestine laboratories, illicit cultivation or vulnerable international entry points** require specialised intelligence and preventive enforcement.

Transit Corridors:

- Districts located along major **road, rail, maritime and logistics corridors** require coordinated surveillance because they can function as links between supply and consumption markets.

Consumption Hubs:

- Major **urban, educational and industrial centres** require stronger prevention, early identification, counselling and enforcement because concentrated demand can sustain local distribution networks.

Statutory and Enforcement Tools:

NDPS Act and PITNDPS Act:

- The **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985** provides the principal statutory framework for controlling narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in India.

- The **Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988** enables preventive detention of persons involved in illicit narcotics trafficking in accordance with the statutory framework.
- The national strategy combines these legal tools with intelligence-led operations, financial investigation, forensic capabilities and inter-agency coordination.

Investigation-to-Conviction Approach:

- Effective narcotics enforcement requires an end-to-end chain covering **investigation, evidence collection, forensic examination, prosecution and conviction**.
- Improving the quality of investigation and prosecution can reduce cases in which trafficking networks exploit procedural weaknesses, inadequate documentation or delays in forensic examination.

Four Pillars of the Vision Document 2026–2029:

1. Enforcement — Intelligence and Operations:

- The first pillar focuses on strengthening **intelligence-led operations, network dismantling, inter-agency coordination and enforcement capabilities** of State and Central agencies.

2. Precursors and Synthetic Drugs Control:

- The second pillar addresses the growing threat from **synthetic drugs and precursor chemicals**, including clandestine laboratories and diversion of chemicals used in legitimate pharmaceutical and industrial activities.
- The challenge requires balancing strict-control of illicit-diversion with the uninterrupted availability of precursor chemicals for legitimate economic activities.

3. Demand Reduction and Harm Reduction:

- The third pillar focuses on **prevention, awareness, treatment, rehabilitation and harm reduction**, recognising that supply-side enforcement alone cannot eliminate drug dependence.
- The roadmap seeks to strengthen the **Nasha Mukht Bharat Abhiyaan**, preventive interventions in educational institutions, counselling and referral mechanisms, and treatment and rehabilitation capacity.

4. Capacity Building and Coordination:

- The fourth pillar emphasises institutional strengthening of **State governments, ANTFs, NCB, forensic laboratories and other enforcement and health institutions**.
- Training of law-enforcement personnel, forensic experts, healthcare professionals, teachers and other stakeholders is intended to improve the overall capacity to prevent and investigate drug abuse.

Major Challenges in Narcotics Control:

Synthetic Drugs and Clandestine Laboratories:

- Trafficking is increasingly diversifying towards **synthetic drugs**, including methamphetamine and other laboratory-produced substances, which can be manufactured in smaller and more mobile facilities.
- Clandestine laboratories make detection more difficult and create additional risks from hazardous chemicals.

Precursor Chemical Diversion:

- Many precursor chemicals have legitimate industrial and pharmaceutical applications, making their regulation a **dual-use governance challenge**.
- Effective control requires monitoring production, distribution and end use without unnecessarily disrupting legitimate manufacturing activities.

Transnational Trafficking and Geographical Vulnerability:

- India's location between the **Golden Crescent** and **Golden Triangle**, two major illicit drug-producing regions, creates persistent risks of cross-border trafficking.
- Land borders, maritime routes and international logistics networks require continuous intelligence-sharing and coordinated surveillance.

Forensic and Judicial Bottlenecks:

- Delays in **chemical analysis, evidence processing, investigation and prosecution** can weaken cases and prolong trials.
- Strengthening forensic infrastructure and ensuring timely submission of scientifically validated evidence are therefore important for improving enforcement outcomes.

Balancing Enforcement with Rehabilitation:

- Drug dependence has both **law-enforcement and public-health dimensions**, requiring prevention and treatment alongside action against trafficking networks.
- The national roadmap therefore combines supply reduction with **demand reduction, rehabilitation, counselling and community participation**.

Way Forward:***Strengthen ANTF Capabilities:***

- State ANTFs require dedicated **manpower, budgets, digital investigation capabilities, cyber-forensic expertise and specialised training** to address increasingly technology-enabled trafficking.

Institutionalise Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society Coordination:

- Effective narcotics control requires continuous information exchange among **NCB, State Police, customs authorities, financial-intelligence agencies, forensic laboratories, health institutions and district administrations**.
- The Vision Document explicitly adopts a **Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approach**, combining enforcement with prevention, rehabilitation and community participation.

Expand Forensic Capacity:

- States should strengthen specialised **narcotics-testing laboratories, mobile forensic facilities and rapid chemical-analysis capabilities** to reduce investigative delays.

Improve Coastal and Border Surveillance:

- Integrated surveillance of **coastal areas, ports, airports and land borders**, supported by intelligence-sharing and technology, can reduce opportunities for international trafficking networks.

Integrate Supply and Demand Reduction:

- India's narcotics strategy should simultaneously target **production, financing, trafficking and local distribution**, while expanding prevention, treatment and rehabilitation for people affected by substance dependence.
- The 2026–2029 roadmap envisages stronger treatment and rehabilitation capacity, drug-free educational environments and wider community participation.

Value Addition for UPSC:***Key Concepts:***

- **ANTF:** Specialised Anti-Narcotics Task Force operating at the State or Union Territory level.
- **NCORD:** Multi-agency coordination mechanism for combating drug trafficking and drug abuse.
- **Network-Centric Enforcement:** Strategy focused on dismantling the entire trafficking ecosystem rather than only intercepting individual consignments.
- **PITNDPS Act, 1988:** Statutory framework providing for preventive detention in specified cases of illicit narcotics trafficking.
- **NDPS Act, 1985:** Principal Indian law governing narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- **Darknet Trafficking:** Use of concealed digital networks and online marketplaces for illicit drug transactions.
- **Precursor Chemicals:** Chemicals that can be used in the manufacture of narcotic or psychotropic substances and may also have legitimate industrial applications.

Prelims Facts:

- **3rd National Conference of ANTF Heads:** New Delhi, 22 September 2026.
- **Participants:** ANTF heads from 36 States and Union Territories, along with concerned government departments and stakeholders.
- **National Roadmap:** Vision Document on Narcotics Control, **2026–2029**.
- **Four Pillars:** Enforcement; Precursors and Synthetic Drugs Control; Demand and Harm Reduction; Capacity Building and Coordination.
- **Principal Enforcement Law:** Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, **1985**.
- **Preventive Detention Law:** Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, **1988**.
- **Coordination Mechanism:** Narco-Coordination Centre.
- **Target:** Achieving a **Drug-Free India by 2029** through measurable targets, timelines, monitoring and coordinated action.

QUESTIONS

1. Consider the following two statements:

Statement 1: The UN Security Council currently consists of 5 permanent members with veto power and 10 non-permanent members elected for two-year terms.

Statement 2: Reforming the UN Security Council requires overcoming veto politics and achieving consensus among major powers holding divergent strategic interests.

Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- (A) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct, and Statement 2 provides the logical operational challenge to altering the structure described in Statement 1.
- (B) Both Statement 1 and Statement 2 are correct, but Statement 2 has no operational relationship with Statement 1.
- (C) Statement 1 is correct, but Statement 2 is incorrect.
- (D) Statement 1 is incorrect, but Statement 2 is correct.

2. Consider the following activities undertaken in rural India:

- (1) Apiculture and Sericulture
- (2) Forest-produce collection and value addition
- (3) Vermiculture and Livestock rearing
- (4) Seed production and Post-harvest handling

Under the framework of contemporary gender-responsive agricultural policies such as the Maharashtra Women Farmer Empowerment Act, 2026, how many of the above activities formally qualify a individual for recognition as a "Woman Farmer" irrespective of land ownership?

- (A) Only one
- (B) Only two
- (C) Only three
- (D) All four

3. With reference to the institutional and regulatory architecture governing Ayurvedic medicines in India, consider the following statements:

- (1) Ayurvedic drugs are regulated under the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Drugs Rules, 1945.
- (2) The Pharmacopoeia Commission for Indian Medicine and Homoeopathy (PCIM&H) functions as the Central Drugs Laboratory for Indian systems of medicine.
- (3) Food safety standards for traditional Ayurvedic food products fall exclusively under the Ministry of Ayush without any involvement from FSSAI.
- (4) Ayushman Arogya Mandirs are operationalized solely by constructing new tertiary super-specialty hospitals across urban districts.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (A) 2 and 4 only

- (B) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (C) 1 and 2 only
- (D) 1, 3 and 4 only

4. Given below are two statements, one labeled as Assertion (A) and the other as Reason (R):

Assertion (A): The implementation of SSA 5000 is expected to significantly reduce greenwashing and selective disclosure by corporate entities in India.

Reason (R): SSA 5000 establishes a principles-based independent audit mechanism requiring sustainability claims to be substantiated by verifiable evidence, audit trails, and defined reporting boundaries.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- (A) Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A.
- (B) Both A and R are true, but R is NOT the correct explanation of A.
- (C) A is true, but R is false.
- (D) A is false, but R is true.

5. With reference to the institutional architecture for narcotics enforcement and coordination in India, consider the following statements:

- (1) Anti-Narcotics Task Forces (ANTFs) are specialized enforcement units operationalized primarily at the State and Union Territory levels.
- (2) The Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) mechanism incorporates a multi-tier structure with State-level meetings chaired by Chief Secretaries and District-level meetings chaired by District Magistrates.
- (3) The Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (PITNDPS) Act, 1988 provides the statutory framework for preventive detention of narcotics offenders.
- (4) The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985 excludes financial investigation and asset confiscation mechanisms from its enforcement scope.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (A) 1 and 4 only
- (B) 1, 2 and 3 only
- (C) 2, 3 and 4 only
- (D) 1, 2, 3 and 4

ANSWER KEY

1 – Answer (A), 2 – Answer (D), 3 – Answer (C), 4 – Answer (A), 5 – Answer (B)



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